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**T H R E E   W I V E S .**

**VOL. I.**



# THREE WIVES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS,"

"THE VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES,"

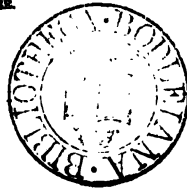
&c., &c.

"Heaven witness  
I have been to you a true and humble wife,  
Ever in fear to kindle your dislike;  
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry  
As I saw it incline. Sir, call to mind  
That I have been your wife in this obedience  
Upwards of twenty years."

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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**LONDON:**  
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**BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.**

THIS BOOK  
IS  
DEDICATED TO ONE OF THOSE  
LOVING AND BELOVED WIVES AND MOTHERS  
THAT ARE THE BOAST  
AS WELL AS THE BLESSING  
OF  
ENGLAND,  
THERESA COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY:



**THE LADY ELIZABETH.**

**VOL. I.**

**B**



## CHAPTER I.

“Soft went the music the soft air along,  
While fluent speech, a vowell'd under-song,  
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low.”

KEATS.

“THIS is not your first season ?”

“No, I came out last year.”

“I thought so ; and you are not engaged yet ?”

“Engaged !” echoed the elder, though the younger-looking of the two.

Fair, sweet, not to say simple, looked the Lady Elizabeth Ellerton. Handsome, intelligent, and self-possessed seemed the younger *debutante*, Lady Rose Alwyn, whose pretty face was expressive of a scornful surprise, that this should be the second season of her companion, and yet she seemed innocently ignorant of the importance of the word “engaged.” A colour rose to the cheeks of the Lady Elizabeth. Young things are so quick to interpret the thoughts of each other, but if she read the disdain in Lady Rose’s heart, she was too

meek to resent it, or too shy to show any other expression than the involuntary one of blushing.

Finding her companion did not intend to say more, after echoing the word "engaged," Lady Rose, assuming a pretty little girlish importance, said, patronizingly,

"Not that I am engaged yet, but, then, 'tis not the end of the season—besides, mamma thinks it would be as well for me to wait until the autumn visiting begins at country-houses. It is wonderful the good matches that are made then. The men are quartered in the house with one, you know."

"Are they?" murmured the Lady Elizabeth, feeling it necessary to say something.

"Of course they are. Had you no invitations last year?"

"Oh! yes, I went to my cousin's, the Bagshot Smythes; we were for three weeks at Ellerton with my uncle."

"And did you meet no one there in particular?"

"I forget," answered the simple Elizabeth.

Lady Rose took, what is termed, stock of her companion. They had known each other by sight since the season began, but had only that evening been introduced to each other. Chance had placed them side by side at a concert, and in

the pauses of music they interchanged a few words.

It depended upon individual taste which of the two girls might be considered the handsomest. Lady Elizabeth had the advantage of figure and complexion. Both were almost faultless, but she lacked the sparkling animation and sprightly manners of the Lady Rose. In fact, she had no expression at all, beyond a gentle wondering look in her eyes, as if she was bewildered.

There was no question as to Lady Rose's fitness for the scene before her. Though still girlish—almost childish—she drank in all the various sayings and doings around her with vivid delight and sympathy, and was imbibing new ideas with every fresh arrival. Nothing escaped her, and while mentally appraising a new dress, or deciding the becomingness of a novel mode of arranging the hair, she settled in her subtle, fast little brain of what most of her neighbours were thinking. It is to be feared she did not credit them with much, for in another pause in the music she turned to the young neighbour, whose mind was so different to her own, and essayed once more to extract something from her. Lady Rose, with all her quickness and much-prized shrewdness, was not indifferent to the charm of a high-bred grace, that,



unconscious to the Lady Elizabeth she wholly forgot herself. From the first moment that her quick eyes had been attracted by the beautiful figure and gentle smiling of her neighbour, she had been anxious to make her acquaintance; and if others had found fault with the unchanging sweetness of her expression, Lady Rose confessed to herself, in her heart of hearts, that she envied her the unmistakable gift of purest refinement. She moved with the utmost grace, she danced with a carriage that was faultless; she uttered her little nothings with so gracious an amiability, that, in the fast language of her Eton brother, Lady Rose could only repeat to herself, "She is the most thorough-bred girl of the season." And never having felt envy before, she desired now to turn that uncomfortable feeling into friendship, or to find some flaw in the object that created it.

"Do you like music?"

"Yes, but I understand so little about it, I find I admire what, perhaps, few others do."

"I should not care for that. I rather like having my own opinion." The gentle eyes of Lady Elizabeth opened, not so much in deprecation, as if expanding to take in a new idea. "Not that I like concerts in comparison with balls."

"It is pleasant to rest and listen," replied Lady Elizabeth, a little sententiously.

"Do you go out much?"

"Yes—almost every night, if I can get a chaperon. I do not like to tax my grandmamma too much."

"Oh! dear me, what a bore I should think it if I was prevented going out for want of a chaperon. Luckily, my mother is as fond of going out as I am; she will have plenty of it, for I have five sisters. How many have you?"

"None—I am by myself."

"Ah! then you need not hurry yourself to marry. Now, I must do so, to get out of my sisters' way. Only I don't mean to take the first person that offers—do you?"

The gentle Elizabeth again opened her eyes.

"I have not thought of marrying yet—I seem almost still in the school-room."

"Oh! nonsense, you must have thought a little about it. I am sure, I was only ten years old when I first settled in my own mind the sort of boy I would marry."

"Boy!"

"Yes, then of course boy—now, young man. Tall and dark."

"And now," interrupted Lady Esmont.

Lady Rose laughed.

"I am afraid your grandmother has made a fine prize of you."

"She is very particular. I do not dislike it."

Lady Rose smiled in her heart the little stately air that accompanied these words, yet she said, *earnestly*,

"Of course you would not think of rank, or money, or any other qualification but goodness?"

"I do not know. I should not like to marry beneath me."

"And is that all you have thought on the matter? Now, I really must confess something to you, though you must promise to tell no one. I never see a man come into the room, if he is unmarried, that I don't immediately begin to take him to pieces in my mind, and see whether he will do for the husband I mean to have. All my partners undergo the same ordeal—that is, if they are eligible. Of course mamma would not hear of anything like a common-place love-match. I must endeavour to secure an excellent one in every way, because, when one sister marries well, all the rest are pretty sure to follow. Being the eldest, I must sacrifice myself for the others—that is, if it

is a sacrifice. I am afraid it is no such thing—I am much of mamma’s mind.”

Lady Elizabeth seemed to be listening to Greek, for anything she understood of what her companion was saying. Nevertheless, something smote her good taste, or the innate delicacy of her mind received a shock, for, with a sudden animation, that lighted up her gentle face into wonderful beauty, she said,

“No, oh! no—to love, I have heard, is no sacrifice; and who would marry who did not love?”

For a moment Lady Rose was lost in admiration of her prettiness; but her precocious worldliness could not withstand the merriment caused by her companion’s simplicity.

“To think that you have been out nearly a year and a-half and know no better. What a pity it is that you have no sisters or companions.”

Lady Elizabeth could make no reply, had she been so inclined, for singing began again. As the two girls listened to it with composed silence, an observer would have settled in his own mind that the pretty, sparkling Lady Rose was a *debutante* of some standing; while the simple, innocent Elizabeth was just out of the school-room. Over the face of Lady Rose flitted all sorts of ideas, hu-

morous, sarcastic, and sagacious. Her eyes were everywhere, yet her little gloved hand beat time to the music. The serene eyes of Lady Elizabeth never wandered for a moment from the singer. Her lips, just parted, gave to her face somewhat the expression of a wondering child. By some instinct belonging to her nature, Lady Rose became aware that close behind them sat one who, in her secret heart, and she knew in the secret heart of her mother, they had agreed was the fortunate person whom it would exactly suit them both for Rose to marry. She no longer heard a note of the singing. She was arranging in her mind a few soft words of welcome, schooling her features into a smile of surprise and joy, tasking her eyes with speechless messages, which none knew better how to send. But before the song ended, he moved silently away.

"Did you see him?—he was close behind us," she whispered excitedly to Lady Elizabeth, as the song ended, and she indicated whom she meant.

"Yes," she answered composedly; "I saw him come in. I think I have now felt what music must be to those who love it."

## CHAPTER II.

"She is a precious jewel I have found  
 Among the ruth and rubbish of the world.  
 I'll stoop for it. And when I wear it here,  
 Set on my forehead like the morning star,  
 The world may wonder—but it will not laugh."

LONGFELLOW.

"I SUPPOSE it will end in my marrying,  
 Audrey?"

"Why so?" answered his sister, quickly.

"I have seen a girl I rather like."

"There are but two, this season, worth looking  
 at."

"Perhaps she is one of them?"

"Don't be tiresome, Silborough. You have  
 tried marriage once before. You are provided  
 with an heir—why trammel yourself with a wife?"

"I rather fancy I should like a wife—it steadies  
 one."

Lady Audrey Buckhurst perceived, by some  
 sign best known to herself, that her brother was

determined on marriage at all hazards, and that it was her wisest plan to aid rather than thwart him. Nevertheless, she could not restrain an angry biting of her lips—a sudden, swift, irrepressible gesture of disappointment. Some years older than her brother, she had assumed a care of him, that might be termed maternal.

He had inherited an earldom from his father while yet in the cradle. His vast wealth had been hoarded during his minority, until it was scarcely to be summed up. He was worshipped as a little king before he could walk, and this worship had continued up to the present hour. He had but to wish to have ; and the curse that attends upon riches encircled him like proof-armour. He knew nothing of what went on in the world, but in the circle of which he was the sun. Naturally amiable, he had no scope to exercise it, for everybody applauded whatever he did. To give away money was simply to scatter about that of which he had more than he could use. Not clever, he had never reasoned with himself as to the accident of being born to honours and wealth, and the necessity of making an individual character by some personal virtue or vice. He was unable to realise that people could care for gold, as an absolute

want for mere bread ; and he had never gone so far as to ask himself why the poor worked so hard. To amuse himself all day, and fritter away half the night, had been all the labour he had to do for the last twelve years. And if a sort of growing apathy and *ennui* had come upon him of late, it seemed to him to be caused more by the world becoming duller every day rather than that he was sated with luxury.

He married, on becoming of age, a young creature apparently born on purpose to be his wife. Amongst the most upper of the upper ten thousand, she was reared in the essence of lilies and roses. Enshrined in a palace of exquisite refinement and luxury, she scarcely knew that the seasons changed, or that cold winds blew, and bleakness and winter asserted a rigid power. She saw people different to herself, and pitied them ; but she only pitied them because they had poor dresses, and could not robe themselves in costly lace, satin, or pearls. Of any of the stern realities of the world she was utterly ignorant, and probably would have regarded them as she regarded the miseries she had to pity in novels, if they had been described to her.

Neither of these two young people was so



much to blame for the extreme concentration of self that belonged to both. Those who had the care of them should be charged with it.

Selfishness runs riot over the world, even among those whose fortune and condition necessitate work and submission. We have but to place ourselves in the position either of those we envy or those we despise, to perceive that the perils which surround the rich are the subtlest and the mightiest to destroy. The "camel passing through the eye of a needle" should be remembered with gratitude by the poor and hard-working. Is there any type so expressive, any example so emphatic—so extreme as this, in the whole Bible?

Time was not given to the young Countess of Silborough to shake herself free of the silken chains of wealth and prosperity. Though she but exchanged one palace for another, she was too much of a hot-house plant, too delicate and tender for any of the world's work. Ignorant that she was of different clay from other mortals, or that she really had no constitution to bear the shock, her doctors seemed not to have been sufficiently careful of so delicate a creature after her confinement.

Apparently she recovered, and entered with renewed zest into that strange vortex of life called

pleasure. A little over-fatigue, a slight cold—a sort of fairy's cough, none of which would have been noticed, had not everything she said or did been of paramount importance, caused her to be again placed in the doctor's hand. Perhaps an order to breathe fresh country air, perhaps a total change in the habits of her life—perhaps a thousand things might have saved her. But she was not saved. Now better, now worse, she suddenly slipped through the fingers of the nurses, doctors, relations, and husband, each making her their chief care—and died, before they realized she was in danger.

It was after her death that Lady Audrey Buckhurst came to console and amuse her brother. She was married to a handsome, clever, proud scion of a noble house, who, connected with the heads of the government, hang their younger sons on to their skirts, for any odd work that may suit a young nobleman to do. He pleased Lady Audrey's fancy by his beauty, he gratified her ambition by being always seen when anything was going on ; and he was so far like a tame cat about the court, and ministry, he certainly knew as much of the sacred secrets belonging to each as the sacred people themselves.

This was a privilege that Lady Audrey delighted in. It gave her an importance which she found superior to rank or riches. And when made, for default of a Countess of Silborough, the head of her brother's magnificent establishment, she had no other wish to gratify. To keep him single was now her sole care, and she was unwearied in her efforts to let him feel that a Countess would be rather in his way than not.

"Where could he have seen this girl he rather liked?" she asked herself, wildly. "Yesterday he only attended the Duchess's morning concert. Who was at it?" Her quick memory ran over the names of every *debutante*. "Lady Elizabeth Ellerton and little Rose Alwyn are the only two girls whose beauty is indisputable. The former he knew last year, and seemed to care little for her; Rose is not altogether in his style, she is rather noisy. I pray Heaven it may not be Lady Rose. Adieu to my home here if she is the one!"

Acting upon the promptings of wisdom, Lady Audrey schooled herself to say quietly,

"I have wondered once or twice whether you have noticed the faultless high-breeding of Elizabeth Ellerton."

"That is the girl! I overheard her and pretty

flippant Rose Alwyn discoursing on matrimony at the concert yesterday. Lady Rose discovered my propinquity after awhile, but Lady Elizabeth ignored it altogether. As you say, she carries her good blood with a fitting air, yet she has a healthy cheek and brilliant eye, showing that it arises from no delicacy of constitution. I think she is a girl who would give me very little trouble as a wife."

"Do you mean that she is stupid?"

Lord Silborough paused. It must be owned that it was the impression on his mind that Lady Elizabeth was stupid, and that it was a merit in his eyes she was so. At the same time it was the last thing he meant to do to allow it to his sister. She would make every use of the expression to his own and his now intended wife's confusion.

"She is extremely shy, and I like it in her. The fault of the girls of the present day is, you have nothing to teach them. On the contrary, they teach you."

"Rose Alwyn, for instance."

"True; but what can you expect from such a mother? She is the most unscrupulous woman I know, and ought to be forbidden all intercourse with a daughter as soon as she is married."

"Her blood will break out in the daughter,

though they are separated with ever so much care."

"Very likely; but I am not going to experimentalise on the future. One advantage my Elizabeth possesses—she has no mother."

"Your Elizabeth! Have you proposed?"

"No, but I have been thinking of her so much, she already seems to belong to me."

"Her grandmother looks very high for her."

"I know that—I honour her for it. She will be pleased to look so high as me."

"Vain fellow! But there is no doubt about it, you are, though a widower with one child, and that the heir, undeniably the best match of the season."

"With a scrupulous old dame like Lady Ellerton, my being a widower with one child will be rather in my favour. She will think I have sown my wild oats."

"Ha! ha! so she will. When will you propose?"

"Not yet awhile. My Elizabeth is even younger in feelings than in looks. I must get her accustomed to me. I like a girl to be at that stage of her life when she would rather not marry than marry, and this I am convinced is the condition of the stately young Elizabeth, though this is her second season."

"I think that is owing to the manner in which

her grandmother has educated her. She employed a model religious governess, and being a model religious woman herself, they have made Lady Elizabeth a model religious girl!"

"I do not think they have made anything of her as yet, I am happy to say. They have left that to me. She will expand under my tuition into everything I could wish."

"Well, accept my congratulations."

"Thank you, Audrey. By the by, there will be no reason for you to turn out."

"Much obliged. It would be inconvenient, certainly, to move in the middle of the season. Besides, Buckhurst has every prospect of a place, and it would be horrid just as one was settled to turn out again."

"By all means stay to suit your own convenience. Ta-ta."

Lord Silborough knew his sister's character very well, but not as well as he ought, otherwise he would not have placed in such unscrupulous hands a promise of this kind. While she mentally resolved her convenience would be difficult to suit, she rushed up to the suite of apartments set aside for herself, her husband, and two little girls, to seek for him.

Lullington Buckhurst, without being a bad man, was capable of everything that was bad. He only wanted the provocation. Being prosperous, fairly rich, happily married, duly appreciated, he had no opportunity of being a villain. Prosperity was pleased to make him good, in spite of bad propensities. In this instance riches, so far from being a curse, proved a safeguard.

"Oh, my dear Buckhurst, fancy what news I have to tell you !"

"Bad, I can see, by your face."

"Silborough is going to marry !"

"Nonsense ! What a fool he is !"

"But he is just foolish enough to be extremely obstinate."

"When did he propose ?"

"He has not done so yet ; the girl is that good-looking, well-bred Elizabeth Ellerton."

"I never saw him even speak to her. I fancied he thought her extremely stupid, as all the men do."

"He is pleased to see something in her that they do not. Lull, what are we to do ?"

"I am sure I do not know if you do not. Women are never at a loss to damage one of their own sex."

"I do not see my way to do it. She stands too

high, not only with regard to herself, but her family. Fancy blowing upon old Lady Ellerton. The woman would not mind slaying me in her righteous wrath."

"The whole Ellerton family are deadly good and punctilious. And the pains I have taken with Silborough's bachelor pleasures—'tis most ungrateful of him."

"And the trouble I have undergone about his house, and all his fid-fads and whims. Really 'tis too provoking."

"Don't cry, there is this comfort—he has not proposed, and he may find, on nearer acquaintance, that she is not what he thought her."

Lady Audrey shook her head.

"He is bent on matrimony for his own sake, as he told me he thought it would steady him."

"Hang the fellow! he is not half as wild as some of the married men I know."

"You, for instance," exclaimed Lady Audrey, with a sudden jealous pang.

"Pooh! Audrey, be satisfied; or at all events lay my sins in the right quarter—your own desire to keep Silborough unmarried. It behoves me to go and get myself written down in the minds of those worthies, our rulers, as a poor victim turned



out of house and home. So let me begone."

"Silborough told me I might stay here as long as it suited my convenience."

"Let that be a precious long time, my Audrey. One does not willingly give up such a cook or such wines. Meantime, there is no harm in my trading on our probable destitution."

"Be cautious, Buckhurst; remember the proposal is not made."

"Oh! I have no desire to quarrel with Silborough; very far from it. I shall just take a turn in the Park, and remark as nearly within reach of his ear, that there is not a seat or a figure to compare to the Ellerton, and then betake myself to a little real diplomatic business."

"My belief is that if he is to marry, the Ellerton girl, as you call her, will suit us better than any one else."

"I perfectly agree with you. She is eminently sweet-tempered, stupid, and good. In your hands, Audrey, she can successfully maintain these excellent qualities without learning that the world requires something more."

"Don't be too sure; stupid people are so remarkably provoking at the most inconvenient times."

## CHAPTER III.

"I pray thee cease thy counsel,  
Which falls upon mine ear as profitless  
As water in a sieve. Give me not counsel,  
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear."

SHAKESPEARE.

"MAMMA, 'tis all over."

"What, my dear?"

"Any hope that I shall be Countess of Silborough."

"My dearest Rose—how do you know? Is the marriage given out?"

"Not that I know of. In fact, he cannot have proposed, judging by what I saw at the Duchess's concert yesterday. But he rode with Elizabeth Ellerton three times up and down the Row just now; and Raby, the one they call 'Gaby,' declared to me he overheard the pop. And there was that handsome man, Polly Buckhurst, his brother-in-law, looking all smiles as they passed by together, and like a demon when their backs were turned.

"You may be sure, mamma, if Polly Buckhurst did that, he knows the matter is pretty nearly settled. Really it made me quite sick to see him."

The pretty, young face of Lady Rose was suddenly deluged with a rush of tears. She struggled hard to hide them from her mother, by turning away and pretending to remove her hat. But her mother did see them, and, astonished and alarmed that a child of hers, brought up as she had brought her up, should show such symptoms of having feelings, not to say heart, she was totally dumbfounded for the minute. But the urgency of the case prompted a quick *bewilderment* of such a dangerous state of things. Nevertheless it would be fatal to notice the tears.

"As for Polly Buckhurst, he is the most selfish creature of my acquaintance. I shall never forget his abominable conduct at the Palace supper. He knew he only had to ask for a chair for me, intimate as he is there, and I ready to faint with standing. He merely grinned at me when I pointedly asked him to do me the favour, saying, 'Really he was not master of the house.' If ever you are Lady Silborough, Rose, revenge me."

"But, mamma, I tell you my chance is over."

And Rose's voice was dangerously tremulous.

"Oh! nonsense, my dear! Never lose heart. I have had more compliments about your beauty and lively manners, in one week, than was ever accorded me in a whole season. That young Raby is only a gaby, and was doing what is the most fashionable thing to do in London, lying."

"Yes, is it not shocking, mamma, the unabashed fibs people will tell? I declare it makes me feel quite, sometimes, as if I wish I was still in the country."

"I will never believe for a moment," continued Lady Alwyn, thinking it prudent to ignore Rose's heterodox opinions, "that a girl so stupid as Elizabeth Ellerton can be admired and liked more than my pretty, *spirituel* Rose."

"But, mamma, I cannot help observing that the stupid, quiet girls get married sooner than the lively, clever ones. I am sure I do not know why the men choose them for wives, seeing they always like to laugh, and flirt, and talk with us."

And again Lady Rose's tears gushed over.

"This is a most wonderful age for non-marrying. And the truth is, men are so spoilt, so sought after, and have so many luxuries of one kind or another, they really do not care to marry. Only those who are obliged to provide heirs for the fu-

sure. I hear that Lord Nant is just as sickly as his mother."

"It will make no matter to me if he is," answered Rose, a little sadly.

"Come, child," said her mother peremptorily, "there's as good fish in the sea as ever was taken out. Lord Sturton is not the only parti."

"But he is the best—and—and—scow, I had settled—that is—I had got to like him a little."

"Then that was most absurd, after all my advice. Nothing disgusts a man so much as seeing a woman is fond of him. I thought you would have known better, Rose."

Rose snatched her hat from the table, and with a sudden and irrepressible wail of grief, vanished from the room. Her mother, though a worldly woman, was fond of her children. She had spoken rather sharply to Rose, hoping to rouse her pride—but she was scarcely aware how much of temper and mortification belonging to herself she permitted to be shown also.

To lose the best *parti* of the season, and to be told by her mother that she did so from her own fault, might well upset the sunny temper of Lady Rose. And if it was true that such a giddy little worldly thing had been made to feel she had a

heart, a tender mother would have followed to soothe and comfort her. But Lady Alwyn had no tenderness of feeling, though she was fond of her children. She sat for half an hour, full of vexation and worry. At the end of that time she went to seek her husband.

Lord Alwyn was a good-natured, simple, countrified gentleman, who was completely managed by his clever wife. He had of course a few whims and conceits of his own, which she took care so to foster and encourage, that he was beguiled into thinking them both important and remarkable. Down in the country he rode these hobbies with vast content to himself, and much admiration amongst those around. In the whirl of London, he and his crotchets were swept about, like the dead leaves of winter by a mad March wind.

Thus, if he had dared to breathe so monstrous a thought, he would have said that he disliked London. But too well tutored by wife and daughter, he went through the London season with admirable patience and equanimity, comforting himself with the pleasing idea if he was unhappy, it was in the cause of his family and country.

"My dear Alwyn," exclaimed his lady, bolting into his sanctum with the vivacity which warned him

"I shall have to go out to-morrow morning to the Club."

"Well, my dear Alwyn, I am not at all surprised what I shall do to-morrow. I may see a man or two in the House."

"But you must go to-morrow at all events, after meeting Mr. John Lubbock. I wonder if she will give her my regards—"

"Rosie" interrupted Lord Alwyn. "He was a very kind fellow."

"Yes—of course. Did you not go with her to the Zoo?"

"Yes—we have just returned. No accident occurred—she rode the proudest horse round—"

"I know that," interrupted her French ladyship; "but did you hear any reports?"

"Yes, they say Gladstone is going out."

"Nonsense!—about Lord Sutherland."

"He will never be admitted into the Cabinet. Vast influence, doubtless, but no brains."

"My dear Alwyn, excuse me. Rosie has heard he is going to be married; and somehow the foolish child has rather taken a fancy to him."

"No, really—a most excellent match. Let me tell you, love, that he is the best *parti* of the season."

Lady Alwyn contented herself with a smile of contempt at being informed of what not only

she, but the whole world, were so cognisant.

"I want you just to saunter about amongst the clubs, and find out, if you can, what is said about it. We must not have our bright little Rose made unhappy."

"Of course not—I will go at once."

"No one will be there now."

"A good many take their luncheon there, and while away an hour or two before going to the Houses. I think it as well to go, Sophy," continued the anxious father.

"Well, you know best ; but remember to appear perfectly indifferent. Really, the world is so extremely ill-natured, the least hint as to Rose's disappointment will be all over the town before midnight."

"I will be very careful," answered her husband ; "my child's good name is as dear to me as her happiness."

"And you will return here and let us know. There are two balls to-night, and I should like, if there is any truth in it, just to show Rose's face, bright and blooming as ever, in the Park. One cannot be too careful regarding a slur of disappointment getting attached to a girl's name. The men are very like monkeys, most imitative."



Lord Alwyn, a perfect specimen of the mild British gentleman, started suddenly in his armchair. He was absent nearly two hours, and came back with a grimmer step than when he left.

"I am afraid, my love," said he, when closeted with his wife, "this is all very true. I went first to Brooke's. I had a mind to see what sort of cook they have there now, and so ordered luncheon—a whiting——"

"Oh! never mind luncheon, think of my anxiety."

"I did not hear much there, beyond hearing it remarked that Lord Silborough had ridden with the 'Ellerton.' Bad taste in the young men of the present style calling the young ladies after the same fashion they do their horses."

"That is not the only bad fashion they have," said Lady Alwyn, bitterly; "but go on. Did they say he had proposed?"

"No, love; all that they said further was, would he be disposed to make the same splendid settlements on his second wife as he did on his first?"

"Of course, he ought to do so," exclaimed Lady Alwyn, eagerly.

Her husband looked at her, and being unusually alive to what was going on around, he smiled, and answered, "If he marries Rose."

"How can you tease me, Alwyn? You have just intimated he is not inclined to marry Rose."

"I went to the Junior Carlton after leaving Brookes's, having noticed a lot of young men pouring in. By-the-by, my love, what a dreadful habit the young men have got of calling each other odd names! I was introduced to one or two, but, I assure you, who they are I am wholly at a loss to conceive. There was Sop, and Tubs, and Nigger, and the name of Polly was banded about; but, of course, I cannot suppose they were talking of a lady."

"Of course not; it was Polly Buckhurst, Lord Silborough's brother-in-law, who is most interested in preventing any marriage, as he and his wife not only rule him, but everything belonging to his magnificent establishment."

"Well, my love, I made out that this Polly has already made known his dissatisfaction, for every young man's mouth was opened on him, describing some scene which took place in the Row to-day, and of which I really saw nothing."

"But Rose did—however, go on."

"I became a little confused with the whirl of tongues, and the names they called each other, and the row; so, after finishing the paper I had

taken up. I went to the 'Travellers.' There I heard that Lord Silborough had proposed to Lady Elizabeth Ellerton more than a week ago, but that her grandmother was sticking about the settlements. The late Lady Silborough's relations make no objection to the marriage, but they demur at any wife of lesser rank having the same settlement as she had. It was suitable for a princess. Old Lady Ellerton contends her granddaughter has as good blood, and shows it better than the late Lady Silborough."

"And quite right too. I applaud the old lady, and hope she will stick out for the last penny."

"After hearing as much as I saw they had to tell, I turned into the Carlton. Silborough was there himself, so I could not hear much, except that one or two men, as they came in, congratulated him. 'What about?' he asked, angrily. I could see, Sophy, he was vexed at something. Whether it is about settlements, as they said at the 'Travellers,' or that Rumour, who is so imaginative, has overtaken his intention, I cannot say. Rumour has generally some ground on which to stand."

"By no means, Alwyn. Rumour has had nothing in this instance to stand on but the simple

fact that he rode up and down the Row with her."

"But the man they call Polly?"

"Oh! he is a fool. I daresay the fright he is always in lest he and his wife should be hurled from their lofty perch makes him more apprehensive than he need be. I shall go and comfort Rose."

"Be careful, Sophy; our child's happiness—"

"Of course, is all I care about. But your news, so far from being bad, I consider extremely good. Don't you see that if Lord Silborough has intimated to his sister his intention to marry—if Lady Elizabeth is his choice—if he was so annoyed as you describe him to have been at the club—why, of course, these premature congratulations will sicken him of the whole affair. If you want to stop a match, my dear Alwyn, talk about it. He intends to marry, or he would not have told his sister, which I conclude he did, or Polly Buckhurst would not have been on the watch. If the town marry him to Elizabeth Ellerton before he has had time to inform them himself, he won't have her. He will suddenly, as is the way with men who have had their own way all their lives, overthrow all their expectations, while he fulfils his own design to marry. After Lady Elizabeth,

there is no girl to compare with Rose—*ergo*——”

“Don’t, my love—pray don’t say any more. We must not give away our Rose after that fashion.”

“Rose shall go in good spirits to the ball to-night—of that I am determined.”

## CHAPTER IV.

“Thought is deeper than all speech ;  
 Feeling deeper than all thought ;  
 Souls to souls can never teach  
 What unto themselves was taught.”

CROUCH.

“MY love, here is a note from Lady Audrey Buckhurst, asking if she can be of any use to you as a chaperon to-night.”

“Miss Cheverill is coming this evening, is she not, grandmamma ?”

“Yes, she is, but she will be leaving, as you go to the ball ;—it will please her to see you dressed.”

“I do not know Lady Audrey much, grandmamma ; I half intended asking Miss Cheverill if she thought my voice capable of singing a song I heard at the concert yesterday, which pleased me so much it has been haunting me ever since.”

“Just as you please, Elizabeth,” answered her



Thousand." At the same time, she had fallen into the feminine error of not taking everything into consideration.

The Lady Elizabeth's character was eminently gentle and submissive, which qualities are generally accompanied by great shyness. Having taken infinite pains to find a model governess, which Lady Ellerton did in Miss Cheverill, these two good women set themselves to form a model young lady out of one who might be said to be a model of goodness, before they took her in hand. Consequently the enthusiasm of virtue awakening in the heart was lost, because it was inculcated by lessons, and finding a ready response, became the habit rather than the instinct. They lost sight of the fact that the purest heart feels the deepest, and that their mode of education should have been to awaken "the fine strain of honour," to rouse the instincts of virtue, leaving them full play to act, while they reserved to themselves the prerogative of controlling them.

Thus placed in a groove, the boundaries of which her shyness clung to as a friend, the young Elizabeth became an accomplished, well-educated woman, but remained, in the mere wisdom of the world, still a complete child. No responsibility had ever



awakened in her heart the struggle between right and wrong, no circumstance had occurred to move the sweet serenity of her temperament. Envy had no place in any part of her organisation. Indeed, there was nothing in her position in life to permit it even to sprout. Her mind was still like an unsullied mirror, which had as yet given back no reflection.

While they rejoiced in the perfection of the automaton they had educated, both grandmother and governess began to perceive the mistake they had made. They were obliged to confess to themselves they wished she was less shy, they hoped she would begin to think.

Poor child! they had done all the thinking for her until she reached the age when shyness becomes a painful possession, and responsibility a dangerous power. They could only console each other by hoping that love might penetrate to the depths of this pure heart, and taking root there, open it to all the sweet sympathies and affections of humanity. Hitherto they had waited in vain, until this evening, when Rumour flying about London, like the madcap it was, flung its anticipatory congratulations into the lap of Lady Ellerton.

And there must be some truth in the rumour,

else why did Lady Audrey Buckhurst make the proffer of chaperonship? Lady Ellerton felt she was justified in just probing her grand-daughter's thoughts a little.

"The ball will be the best of the season," she repeated; "and I suppose, as Lady Audrey is going, her brother will be there."

"Who is her brother?" asked the simple Lady Elizabeth.

"My child! Lord Silborough!"

"Oh! yes, I had forgotten. He rode with me to-day in the Park, grandmamma, and I could not help thinking how sad it was for him, losing his young pretty wife as he did, only two years after his marriage. And she left a dear little boy!"

"I like what I have seen of him."

"So do I, grandmamma; he does not talk the nonsense so many people do. At least, it may not be nonsense, but I cannot understand them."

"I have heard to-day he is going to be married."

"Did you, grandmamma? I hope it is to some one who will love his little boy. Perhaps it is Lady Rose Alwyn." And the gentle Elizabeth's face brightened into one of those gleams of beauty that always accompanied the awakening of an idea in her placid mind.

"VIVRE EN L'AMOUR DE MON PÈRE"

Elizabeth was too old to suspect the conversation of the present, and was silent. Her grandmother in person knew that she had something to tell, yet would not tell it. Of course, in case so singularly inopportune as she acknowledged her grand-daughter to be, this something that she would not tell must have been very marked.

Reasonably she allowed to herself that as long as they had something to talk about, the London world did not care if they put the right names together or not. Nothing could have occurred of a peculiar nature between Lord St.borough and Lady Elizabeth, because she was as unconscious as a child in speaking of him; while something must have happened between him and Lady Rose, for her grand-daughter to remark it. A little wondering at his taste, a little vexed, as usual, whenever she was reminded of the too great simplicity of her grand-daughter, she said suddenly,

"Bring me my desk, Elizabeth, that I may write your excuses to Lady Audrey."

"Pray suffer me to write them, grandmamma; this is your time for being quiet."

Her grandmother thanked her, and gathering her fine Shetland shawl round her, composed her-

self among her cushions. "What have you said, Elizabeth?"

Her grand-daughter read the letter aloud. After appropriate thanks, she pleaded an engagement with her governess—namely, the exact truth; Lady Ellerton's conscience was sadly at war with her wishes.

"It seems hardly excuse enough, Elizabeth."

"Would you rather I accepted, grandmamma?"

"No, child. Let the note go. If she is offended, we cannot help it."

And the note went. An insignificant note in itself, but of vast importance as it happened, though Lady Ellerton never knew this fact.

Miss Cheverill arrived in due time, and their dinner passed in much the same manner as countless of their dinners had passed before. Miss Cheverill was a little given to improve the occasion, and uniformly forbade all conversation upon persons.

"One is so apt to say more than one ought in talking of persons," she would remark, "and there is no occasion to do so, when one has such a fund of conversation in things."

But Lady Ellerton was not so alert as usual in assisting her; while the gentle Elizabeth had always felt it her duty to listen respectfully rather than mix her childish ideas with their experienced

ones. In truth, Lady Ellerton could not avoid recurring to the congratulations she had received, and the supreme pleasure it had given her to hear them, which pleasure she found increasing with every fresh thought of them. The rivalry of Lady Rose faded from her mind. She was more and more convinced her grand-daughter's fate hung on a crisis, and she felt as if she never could forgive herself if this crisis passed away owing to her excessive supineness in not accepting the offer of Lady Audrey Buckhurst.

In the midst of her increasing and unavailing regrets, she was roused by Miss Cheverill saying,

• “Yes, my dear Elizabeth, youth must be so employed as not to embitter the decline of life. An old age like your grandmamma's is one of the most beautiful things to contemplate. It pleases me to think you do not regret a ball, when spending an evening with her.”

“Elizabeth would not have gone to the ball until I was in bed,” interrupted the old lady.

“Yes,” said the truthful Elizabeth; “and I must confess that, besides wishing for your help in mastering the difficulties of this song, I was feeling a little shy at being chaperoned by an almost stranger.”

Miss Cheverill, disappointed in her little effort to applaud and instruct her former pupil at one and the same moment, had nothing left her but to agree with the grandmother, while she playfully remonstrated against any further indulgence in shyness.

"We have often lamented, both of us, that we did not take earlier measures to cure you, Elizabeth, of this shyness; did we not, Lady Ellerton?"

"Yes," answered Lady Ellerton; "and her second season seems to leave her even more shy than her first."

The colour rose in the cheeks of Lady Elizabeth. She seemed as if she was being reproached. Never before had such a circumstance occurred to her. The sweetness of her temper prevented anything like a reply or remonstrance. She sat silently waiting for what they might be pleased to say further on the subject. But it appeared they had both said all they thought necessary. The infallibility of her confidence in both, made Elizabeth feel that she was not altogether acting quite as they liked. Yet how was she to discover what they did want if they did not tell? They might be very sure she would obey them.

But they issued no orders at all, and nothing

particular was said until they went into the drawing-room, where the first thing they all saw was two notes on Lady Ellerton's table.

"If one is kindly written again by Lady Audrey, dear grandmamma, I will go and dress for the ball."

"No, my dear," answered her grandmother, "they are neither of them addressed in her handwriting. Go and try your song while I read them."

In truth Lady Ellerton desired to be alone, when she read them, for the first was addressed in the old-fashioned handwriting of the Duchess of Stradarven, a lady of her own age, and formerly a friend. The long seclusion of Lady Ellerton, and the worldly state and dignity of the Duchess, had interrupted a friendship that had been true and strong while it lasted. The Duchess had been grandmother to the first Lady Silborough. Why did she write to her former friend on a momentous day such as this had been? Lady Ellerton's tuition was not at fault.

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—I have just been told that Silborough likes your pretty stately Elizabeth. How far it is true, who can tell in the wild state society is in at present. But I write just a line to say, nothing would gratify me more.

Just one hint. Do not let punctilio stand in the way of a marriage so eminently satisfactory to all parties ; and when you can speak for a certainty, just put out of suspense your ever affectionate

“ F. STRADARVEN.”

The other letter was from Lady Ellerton's son, the Earl of Ellerton, uncle to Elizabeth :—

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—Is it true that Silborough has proposed to Elizabeth ? I cannot sufficiently congratulate you, if it is so. Pray send me a line, I hope of confirmation, that I may felicitate her to-night at the ball, where of course she will show herself, the envy of everybody. I have as yet said nothing of this at home ; I wait until I hear from you. For though the clubs were full of it, and even spoke of a disagreement between you and Silborough as to settlements, I am confident you would have sent for me. Should this prove only one of those unfortunate *canards* that people fling so recklessly about, I need not caution you as to the manner of treating it. Let her be seen everywhere, and persuade the dear child to rattle a little if she can, after the manner of other girls. It is a cruel habit people have got into lately of spoiling many a suitable marriage by anticipating



the actual proposal. The messenger will wait for a reply. Ever your affectionate son, ELLERTON."

Lady Ellerton answered the first note with dignified pleasure—dwelling more on the happiness of seeing the well-known hand-writing, and reading the kind expressions so long remembered of former years, than the subject of it. She merely touched delicately on the tendency of London society to amuse itself with a new report every day; but she could not resist a little grandmotherly pride in the sweet grand-daughter that had been so long her care.

"I am so happy," she wrote, "as to have no fault to find with my Elizabeth, but the pardonable one of being a little shy. And I fear, in this fast and reckless age, I regard it at times even as a virtue. I have great confidence in my hope that, in whatever position it may please God to place her, she will prove worthy of it."

To her son Lady Ellerton permitted herself the comfort of a little outpouring of her heart. If she was a little bitter as to the selfish folly that played so carelessly with important fate, she was to be pardoned. She looked up from her paper and saw the beautiful gentle girl standing at the piano,

singing with infinite sweetness. And as she could not but admire the faultless form, the sweet expression, she proudly assured herself the mind within was still more pure and perfect. Surely if a man had cast it over in his heart that she would suit him for a wife, let him be the highest in the land, he must acknowledge, the more he knew of her, the more she would grow upon his liking.

But her notes must be dispatched. The evening wore away, Miss Cheverill departed, Elizabeth received her grandmother's kiss and good night in the same fashion she had ever done, without an apparent thought of the gossip of London, or the trouble that had assailed the heart of her grandmother. For she knew of neither, as her grandmother was obliged to confess.

"You do not seem to regret the ball, Elizabeth."

"I had forgotten all about it, grandmamma. I am not sure if a quiet evening, as this has been, is not very pleasant, in the midst of so much gaiety."

"I fancy Miss Cheverill and I have made you too grave, my dear."

"Tell me, grandmamma, how you would wish me to be different."

"Indeed, my darling, I know not how to wish you better."

## CHAPTER V.

"Her true beauty leaves behind  
 Apprehensions in my mind  
 Of more sweetness than all art  
 Or inventions can impart."

WITHER.

WE have attended a good many conferences of one sort or another, and entered into the most secret recesses of one or two hearts. There is one more it would be as well to know something of, and for that purpose we will enter the luxuriant and beautiful room the Earl of Silborough was wont to call his library.

He is seated in a chair of Oriental luxury and softness: he has a table on one side of him, heaped up with books and magazines, with another as close bearing antique bottles, curiously-carved glasses, and every luxury in the way of wine. The room is full of the perfume of roses, mirrors reflect its costly fittings and priceless pictures, and there is nothing that the heart of man could devise as a

want that is not within it. Yet at this moment Lord Silborough is, as is the fashion of men, relieving a fit of ill-humour by pouring forth a torrent of bad language no pen could lend itself to write down. Books are sent flying to the other end of the room, a glass or two is shattered, and still the torrent pours on. At last milder terms may be recorded. "It is all the doing of Audrey. I was a fool to tell her. She has told Polly, and he has divulged it, and now the whole of London is ringing with it, while the idea only came into my own head yesterday afternoon. One is almost tempted to wish oneself a clodhopper, for the mere luxury of being able to move without being noticed. I won't go out this evening—I will go to Paris tomorrow. I will be off to Norway—Africa!"

Another burst of unwritable language. Then a reasonable moment.

"After all, they will only laugh at me. 'Tis best to brave it out. I'll go to the ball to-night, but I won't even see her. I will flirt with the ugliest girl there. No, they will see through that, confound them! I will dance with her, perhaps. Well, I will see about that. I will make up to little Rose Alwyn. At all events, I will rescind my order about the carriage. I wonder if Audrey

is at home. I shall quarrel with her if I see her. I will have my dinner here, and say I am not to be disturbed. I will go to the ball or not, just as I feel in the humour when the time comes."

Having soothed and calmed his soul by these promises, Lord Silborough tried to read the papers, tried to read a book, tried to snooze. He was most indifferently successful in all three efforts. Fortunately the time came for dinner, which he ate in slippers and dressing-gown. The dinner was excellent, and the effect of its excellence was visible in the improvement of his temper.

"After all, these bachelor habits are very seducing," he said to himself, as he lolled back on his comfortable cushions, and sipped his wine; "I don't think I shall go out. And yet it will be very dull here all the evening by myself. That's why I think a wife a good thing for a man to have—it settles him, and gives him an object. After all, they will be madly hot after some other report to-morrow—I will invent one for their amusement, and put it about in the ball-room to-night. They will leave me and my concerns alone for something new. Let me see, what shall it be? Goldsborough is about to appear in a Cresswell

case!—Alwyn has been seen at the Alhambra!—Sop's grandmother has come to see after him!—the Chimpanzee is going to be married by the Bishop of London to the Ring-tailed Monkey!—any folly will do for these people. But 'tis time to dress—half-past eleven."

The Earl of Silborough having recovered his good-humour, and, like many persons who have been in a passion, becoming, as the calm after a storm, more sweetly amiable afterwards, repaired to the different places at which he had promised to show his face, winding up with the ball, which was rightly supposed to be the ball of the season. The first person he saw was Lady Rose Alwyn, whose pretty, sparkling face grew prettier and brighter as he approached.

"I declare I thought you were not coming at all!" she exclaimed, pettishly.

"Did you miss me?" he replied, carelessly.

"Of course people miss Lord Silborough."

"Do they really? I fear I am ungrateful, I do not seem to miss them."

"They want to congratulate you."

"By all means—congratulations never come amiss."

Lady Rose felt too much to dare to say more; and, to hide her blushes, affected to arrange her flowers.

"Will you dance?" asked Lord Silborough, drifting into anything to which Fate might lead him, though, in truth, he thought it politic to dance with Lady Rose first, so that it might not seem singular whom he danced with after. After one or two turns, and satisfying himself Lady Elizabeth was not to be seen, he asked Lady Rose, "Where is your foil to-night?"

"My foil!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; don't you know that London has decreed that you and Lady Elizabeth Ellerton are foils to each other?"

"'Tis lucky for me that she is not here to-night. I have not seen her, and people have been hinting you were the cause."

"How so? Poor girl! I will go away if you will send for her."

"Nonsense!—you know I mean that her absence and your late arrival, coupled with Polly Buckhurst's announcement——"

"What! am I indebted to Polly for being smothered to-day with congratulations?"

"Of course you are; and how could it be other-

wise, when you rode three times up and down the Row with her?"

"And, do you know, I am going to do so to-morrow, and every day for a fortnight."

"For a bet!—oh! how delightful! Do tell me, is it not for a bet, and that you are to acknowledge how many times she made a remark to you?"

"Well, if you will have it so."

"Delicious! Now, will you promise to tell me each day what she says to you?"

"Suppose she says nothing?"

"That will be still more amusing."

"Sil," said a voice behind them—it was Lady Audrey—"I want a word with you."

He went aside with her.

"I thought it might please you if I offered to chaperon some one that you know of to this ball, so I wrote to offer my services, and had this most absurd reply." And Lady Audrey handed her brother the note of refusal written by Elizabeth.

Lady Audrey hoped to effect two things by this measure: first, to please her brother by her amiable attentions to the person he thought to make his wife; and the second to disgust him with her apparent indifference as to courting his society.

She did neither one nor the other. He had been



indignant with her for betraying his confidence, and he was now still more indignant at her presuming to place herself as a go-between in a matter he designed to manage entirely after his own fashion. And so far from thinking the letter an absurd one, he had the good taste, or the perversity, to think it as charming a specimen of an artless excuse, gracefully expressed, as could have been written. He folded it carefully up and put it into his waistcoat pocket, while he said to his sister, in the cold stern way that she knew expressed his most angry mood,

“I am glad she had the good taste to refuse what I must consider a most impertinent kindness.”

Mortified, abashed, and conscious that she deserved rebuke for more things than one, Lady Audrey vanished. It was useless to be angry; but in some natures, if the evil passion within is not allowed vent, it but corrodes the deeper.

Lady Audrey went to sleep that night, thinking if there was one person in the world she hated, it was the simple, innocent Lady Elizabeth Ellerton.

Meantime, the giddy Lady Rose spread about the report of the bet; and if the world did not believe it, still they had given a whole day and half a night to Lord Silborough and his affairs,

and really that was all they could afford him. Something new was brewing—a fortnight was a long time to watch a bet, and a bet about nothing. If he was not going to be married, it was no use thinking about him at all. And if he was going to be married, let him do so, and get it over, that the world might be ready to amuse themselves with something else. In the seething caldron of modern society, no one had time to do more than pop his head for one brief moment up above his fellows, becoming immediately lost to view again in the mass. Lord Silborough got his head up pretty often, but still he must go down sometimes. Society and fashion demanded it. At present Lord Silborough was perfectly content to be down. He rode the next day by the side of Lady Elizabeth, and scarcely a soul remarked it but the giddy little Rose, who told all who cared to hear, "He was doing his bet."

He was doing something certainly, and that was falling silently and quietly in love with the soft girlish innocence of Lady Elizabeth. She might be simple—too simple—but her artlessness was so fresh, her truthfulness so transparent, the world-wise man found a charm in them that made an astonishing impression on him. Undoubtedly

He had loved his first wife, and deeply lamented her loss. But they had never been nearer that boy and girl, and he mourned for her as a youth mourns the loss of a girl. He had become a good man of the world since then, and would better appreciate the difference between beauty of the mind and beauty of the face. He learned to understand the fact that complete justice had not been done to Lady Elizabeth in her education. Naturally slow of comprehension, her imagination and feelings had never been exercised. He was not clever enough himself to have seen that great natures are generally quiet ones, and that nobility of character is always accompanied by repose of manner. In the fussy, bustling, eager mind one rarely looks for heroism. They so overshoot the occasion in their energy, that they miss the moment for absolute success. Their impatience makes the occasion, instead of the occasion making the opportunity. There never was a bustling hero. There never will be a fussy heroine.

On the whole, Lord Silborough rather congratulated himself than not, that the wife he intended to have was still so unformed in character. He had caught—and been astonished at the beauty they gave her—one or two of those gleams of anima-

tion which would burst forth in spite of her constitutional shyness. She had, after a few days' riding up and down the Row, nerved herself to ask, of her own accord, of the welfare of the little Lord Nugent ; and since then he had only to speak of him to excite her gentle sympathies.

## CHAPTER VI.

“The gentle pressure and the thrilling touch,  
 The least glance better understood than words,  
 Which still said all, and ne’er could say too much.”  
 BYRON.

LONDON was prodigiously excited by two things—the Derby Day, and the appearance of two of the great leaders of the fashion in short petticoats, shorter waists, and no crinolines.

“The greatest figures I ever beheld, Rosie!” exclaimed her mother; “but” (with a deep sigh) “I suppose we must do the same. I will send Campbell with all our dresses at once.”

“By no means, mamma; the fashion will not last long. However mad people may be about it, nobody in these days likes making a guy of himself.”

“My dear Rose, you are too daring. You will see everybody will appear to-morrow as guys; it would be different had any other than these two set the fashion.”

"Do as you like, mamma, for yourself, but I won't, so there is an end of it. Gaby says they looked like farthing candles walking about."

"Rose, Rose, your father cannot bear to hear you talk of the young men as they talk of themselves!"

"But Gaby and I are such friends, he does not care what I call him."

"Now, Rose, that is just a matter I desire to caution you about. Captain Raby is flirting seriously with you."

"But I am not flirting seriously with him, mamma. I only just chatter a little with him to—to provoke Lord Silborough."

"Does it provoke him?"

"I do not know, mamma—I wish it did. I begin to fancy, after all, he had no bet as to riding with Elizabeth Ellerton. The whole fortnight has passed, and he is still going on riding with her, and this morning I absolutely heard her laughing with him. If she only knew how beautiful she looks when she laughs and smiles, she would be always doing it."

"But does he pay you any attention, Rosie?—is there anything particular in his manner?"

"Mamma, you know as much as I do. He

divides his attentions pretty equally between me and Lady Elizabeth ; only he rides daily with her, which he never does with me. He says I go too fast for him."

"I wonder he does not find the other go too slow."

"She is so wonderfully refined and well-bred, I think that makes up for her dulness."

"We have sent him five invitations to dinner, and he has accepted two. I do not think it would be prudent to ask him again too soon."

"No, mamma, especially as he has never been asked to the Ellertons at all, which is so odd of them."

"They are very proud, and the old lady has been ill. He was at her uncle's ball."

"Oh ! yes, we saw him there. How ridiculous of them to fancy they could set up a new way of giving a ball !"

"People like change, Rosie."

"Mamma, have you remembered to get papa's permission for me to go to the Derby with the Rabys ? Mind, I must go !"

"I think the safest plan will be to say nothing until you are gone, for your father is so nervous, and so easily swayed, he will give and withhold

his consent a dozen times between this and then."

"Manage it anyhow you like, so that I go. There will be no Elizabeth Ellerton there, I fancy."

But Lady Rose was mistaken. Not only was the Lady Elizabeth at the Derby, but she was in the Stradarven carriage, and Lord Silborough sat by her side. Not only did he arrive on the course sitting by her side, but he sat there nearly all day, only leaving her from a laudable and natural curiosity to see the race from his private box. Not once did he approach the Raby carriage. Though crowds upon crowds throng together with but one apparent object in view, still there are many hearts among them who are thinking of anything rather than what they came to see.

Lady Rose had started that morning from home in a flutter of high spirits, conscious that no one among the mass of pleasure-seekers had so lovely or so becoming a tiny structure called her bonnet. It sat upon her sunny, rippling hair with the airiness and beauty of a gossamer web, and she had settled with herself that Lord Silborough should acknowledge the fact. As for the races, fond as she was of excitement, to-day the races were only the means for her to accomplish a great end. They did nothing of the sort.



Sick at heart, she felt inclined to rail at the folly of the world caring for an amusement that only lasted three minutes; and she knit her little brows with angry contempt at the good-natured Gaby entreating her to steady herself, by putting a foot on his big shoulder, that she might be exalted high enough to see the race well.

Of course, after the race came luncheon, and the multitude fell upon patties, salads, chickens and ham, while a fusillade of champagne bottles drowned all other noise. That excitement over, there was another race; then an eager and vehement discussion on toilettes, with a dying commentary on the farthing-candle dresses of the day before.

"Gaby," whispered Rose to young Raby, "I wish you would find out what makes them all so merry in the Stradarven carriage."

"Why, of course, they ought to be merry—they have got the bride and bridegroom-elect with them!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"Sil and Lady Elizabeth; he proposed a week ago, I believe—and, odd to say, the Stradarvens are as much delighted as the Ellertons. Lady Elizabeth looks rather shy about it—does she not?—but excessively handsome."

Lady Rose was very young, though very fast. She took advantage of the long drive home, and a cold evening wind, to envelope her pretty face and gossamer bonnet in a trebly-folded gossamer shawl. If she cried under cover of the folds, who may blame her? The more so, as she emerged from beneath them a merry laughing Rose again. Fortunate it was so, for her mother was waiting anxiously for her, care and apprehension on her brow.

"Mamma, I know it," was Rose's remark on seeing her mother's face.

"Thank goodness, my darling, that you do! And how well you are looking! After all, Rosie, it would have been an uncomfortable family to enter. They are so proud and punctilious."

"So unlike the Rabys, mamma, who are good-nature itself."

Then did Lady Alwyn understand that she would probably have Gaby for her son-in-law. And, after all, a very good match. The eldest son of a wealthy and highly-respected county family, with so much good blood in their veins, that would Providence but be good enough to remove one or two extremely worthy people to the realms of happiness, Gaby had a chance of being Lord Gaby. And everybody knows how very superior

is an ancient family in a newly-created marriage.

Lady Alving, learning with satisfaction and unexpected regret, proceeded to tell her daughter all she knew of the Silborough proposal and acceptance. But as, of course, rumour is quite incapable of telling the exact truth, it may be as well to mention how the important matter was really done.

The last time we left Lord Silborough it was recorded that he was becoming duly and properly in love. Long before the fortnight was over he had given Lady Elizabeth many unmistakable proofs, quietly, of his intentions. One of these proofs would have been enough for Lady Rose. The whole of them only caused the Lady Elizabeth to begin to think, which had the effect of making her more shy with Lord Silborough than any other person. However, as we have said, he did not dislike it in her. On the contrary, it was one of her attractions.

Having been sought by every stratagem known to the marrying papas, mammas, and daughters for the last six seasons, the withdrawing of Lady Elizabeth's heart closer into its maidenly shell, the dignified reticence of her grandmother, the standing aside of the whole Ellerton family, were each

and all wonderfully to his mind. He therefore only waited a fitting opportunity to speak ; for though a London crowd is at times a very solitary place, yet it was difficult to say in the centre of a circle what he had to say. One evening at an early ball, exactly as Gaby had said a week before, he was so fortunate as to be in a cloak-room with her alone. She was waiting for her chaperon. As he fastened on her cloak, he quietly put his arms round her, and said,

“Dear Elizabeth, will you be my wife—the mother of my little boy?”

It is hard to say if the gentle girl was prepared or not. She raised her eyes to his with a wild flash of astonishment. In a moment their brilliance was lost in a rush of tears. Her face crimsoned, her eyes drooped.

“They are coming—tell me, love,” and he kissed her brow. Still no reply. “I will call to-morrow on Lady Ellerton—tell me by this,” pressing her hand.

The slightest flutter of the fingers answered him, and she was gone.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Rest? Thou must not seek for rest,  
 Until thy task be done;  
 Thou must not lay thy burden down,  
 Till setting of the sun.

"Thou must not let thine heart get cold,  
 Nor hush each generous tone,  
 Nor veil the bright love in thine eyes—  
 Thou must not live alone."

T. M. W.

VERY few girls, especially young ones, hear the whispered words, "Will you be my wife?" without a rush of feeling that has no other outlet but tears—even if there is a doubt of love. Thus Lord Silborough, satisfied that Lady Elizabeth's beautiful emotion was the token of a love he desired, and considered his right, went home perfectly satisfied.

But she had been startled out of a quiescent and tranquil state, into one at the brink of which she stood with fearful and reluctant feet.

"Oh, why had he said those words? Why had

he not left their intercourse as it was, becoming so pleasant, and what she liked? She had begun to watch for him in the Row, and she was happy listening to his kind remarks, and what he had to say of his boy. She hoped he liked her; but to love her—to want to marry her!—the thought scared and abashed her. She longed to be a little child again, only old enough to play with his boy. Yet she felt she was a woman, and that she dreaded the peril and perplexity of having a lover and a husband. If she did not please him—if the ways her grandmother had taught her were not his ways—if she looked as he did not like—spoke words he cared not to hear, and disappointed him, as she feared she must disappoint him, what grief—what agony!

For in the possession of a lover she realized for a moment the childishness and simplicity of her character. She understood that her grandmamma and governess knew that she was good at heart, and that it was only justice for them to love what they had made themselves—but would he? She did not perceive that in this humble opinion of herself, in this anxiety to be worthy of his love, the seeds of it were already sown in her heart.

Since her grandmother's illness it had been

Elizabeth's custom to go every night, on her return from the balls and parties, to ask the watcher who slept in her grandmother's dressing-room, of her grandmother's welfare before she herself went to bed.

Old Lady Ellerton's illness was not serious, beyond the fact that at her advanced age it was necessary to be prudent.

This eventful night, traces of tears still staining her cheeks, Lady Elizabeth entered the dressing-room to make her accustomed whispered inquiry. She was startled and perplexed by hearing her grandmother call her from the inner room.

"Come in, Elizabeth. I am wonderfully better, and think to be in the drawing-room to-morrow. I have been thinking of you too much to sleep, and have a fancy to see how your dress suits you."

There was no alternative but to obey her; and how was she to see her grandmother and not tell her of the mingled emotions that were throbbing in her heart? There was no need to tell Lady Ellerton. One look at the agitated beautiful face was enough. "Elizabeth," she said.

Lady Elizabeth sunk on her knees by the bedside, and hid her tell-tale face in the bed-clothes.

"My child," murmured her grandmother inquiringly.

Accustomed so implicitly to obey, Elizabeth gave voice to a broken word or two.

"He is coming to you—to-morrow; but oh!" she continued, as if reprieved and glad, "it is a mistake—perhaps I have mistaken."

"Perhaps so, darling; go now to bed and sleep. Think no more of this. To-morrow will settle it all."

Grateful, and, it must be acknowledged, hopeful, Elizabeth received her grandmother's kisses, still half-smothered in the bed-clothes, and steadily averting her face, fled to her own room.

There youth and the unwonted excitement exacted their dues, and, as if the least disposition to meditate would effectually banish sleep for the night, she hurried into bed with a rapidity that astonished her maid, and fell asleep almost as her head touched the pillow.

Not so her grandmother, who lay awake, just in the least little bit in the world impatient at the sensitive modesty that would not permit Lady Elizabeth to name the name of her lover—nay, almost to disown she had one. And to leave her for so many hours wondering if the beautiful and



gentle creature had indeed been so fortunate as to secure the best match of the season? But the excitement she was in did the old lady no harm. On the contrary, she felt almost herself in the morning; and cheerfully discoursed with her old maiden, who had been with her so long as to be almost a friend, as to the benefit of a little animation.

"When we are old, Glifface, we are apt to get sluggish and indolent, and any little cold flying about takes hold of us and torments us. But let excitement set one's blood flowing, and some sympathy cause the heart to throb, as it does in youth, and all this humour is worked off, and we feel almost young again."

"True, my lady; but I do think as your ladyship haven't had much sleep to speak of."

"I did not seem to want it, Glifface. Give me my grey satin dress and best cap."

"I hope, my lady, your ladyship ain't going to fatigue yourself with seeing of company."

"Not many, at all events. Go and inquire if Lady Elizabeth is down."

"No, my lady. Her ladyship is in the sweetest of sleeps, so that Margaret haven't the heart to wake her."

“She is right—let her sleep as long as she will.”

So the old lady sat in her drawing-room waiting.

At eleven o'clock there was a stir in the house, as of opening of doors, of coming footsteps. The old lady folded her fair old hands together, and had not framed the prayer she thought of sending to heaven before the door opened, and the Earl of Silborough was announced. He looked round for a moment, as if seeking another form, but if disappointed, he did not show it. He advanced quickly to the old lady, and with a grace born of gentle blood, and gentler nature, he took her hand and kissed it. She motioned to him to take the seat close to her, and was spared any embarrassment as to what to do next by his beginning at once on the subject that brought him there. Truly he did it with an air and a grace that well became him; at the same time he had all the advantage of knowing what he had to say was of the most gratifying, delightful nature. Humbly as he spoke of his aspiring to the honour and happiness of being allied to her, of course he was fully alive to the pleasing fact that he was the best match of the season. True, it was a drawback that he was a widower, and already provided with an heir. Nevertheless, though this might weigh against his

advantages in the eyes of some people—Lady Alwyn, for instance—he was pretty nearly satisfied they were in his favour with the Ellertons. Lady Ellerton might prefer for her inexperienced grand-daughter one who already knew how to treat a young and gentle wife ; while the wife he intended to have had only opened so much of her heart to him under the influence of an interest for his child. Lady Ellerton gave him to understand, after he had fully said all he had to say, that the agitation of her Elizabeth the night before gave her the happiness of assuring him that he was the first person who had ever been able to do so. And, being most deeply moved, as might be expected from her shy nature, she had thought it best not to let her be present at this interview, until she, her grandmother, had told her the result of it.

“You are perfectly right, Lady Ellerton ; and will you assure her from me that I will not confess to the world how happy I hope I am, until she gives me permission. I cannot tell you how much I admire and like the beautiful modesty that shrinks from all publicity in so delicate a matter. It gives me the assurance which, to one in my position, is the greatest boon she can bestow, the conviction I am chosen for myself, and not held

up as a prize she has won against all other competitors. Think me not vain to say this—the accidents of birth and wealth are for ever being mis-called by the world in which we live.”

“They may be accidents, Lord Silborough, but I have tried to make Elizabeth see they are accidents that have consequences—which reminds me to tell you that she has one great fault, a diffidence that is most inimical to the duties of her rank and station.”

“It shall be my duty to cure her of it, Lady Ellerton. I will now go to your son, and lay before him the business part of my proposal; after which I will return here, just to receive a sweet assurance from the lips of my Elizabeth; and, ordering my horses here, we will go together for our usual ride. Nothing in my behaviour shall lead the London world to see anything by which her sensitive heart may be abashed. I leave with you this paper, which contains what I intend to say to Lord Ellerton. And I quit you for the present as happy a man as it is possible to find.”

His manner expressed even more than his words, and he left Lady Ellerton overflowing with happiness and content at the future of her granddaughter. She was so pleased with the interview,

she recalled all he said again and again to her mind, forgetting to look at the paper he had left with her ; and she was still thinking when her grand-daughter entered.

How is it to be explained, the timid reluctance that shrinks from love at first, as if it was an evil rather than a good ? The morning had found Lady Elizabeth with the echo of the words still in her heart, "That she hoped it was a mistake." And in the first meeting with her grandmother the strength of this feeling moved her to do what she had never done before—argue and plead with her.

"I feel so young, so childish, grandmamma, I shrink from taking upon me the sacred duties of wife and mother."

"Too much humility is almost as bad, my child, as overweening confidence. Do you think I should congratulate you on the prospect of marrying if I did not think you fit to fulfil the duties of wife and mother ?"

"You, perhaps, do not see, grandmamma, how helpless I am without you."

"I may see it, Elizabeth ; and if I do, I deplore it."

"Nay, grandmamma !"

"I do, child. I not only deplore it, but take upon me the additional pang of feeling I have brought the pain I suffer on myself."

"Do not think so, grandmamma. I am naturally that which you deplore."

"And I should have uprooted it from a child. But, tell me, Elizabeth, does no inward monitor ever speak to your heart, and say a tranquil existence, a shrinking from responsibility, an apathy, which puts on an appearance of virtue, but is utterly antagonistic to virtue, is not the life we are to lead here? It is an unhealthy state, born of indolence, and indifference to what is good and noble. Virtue, to be virtue, should be ardent, enthusiastic, even exceeding duty, and anticipating the urgency of its wants."

Elizabeth's fine nature readily interpreted her grandmother's words, while her eyes expanded with fear and apprehension as her reason and sense of religion were arraying themselves in a formidable phalanx against her wishes.

"Some ancient poet or writer has said, Elizabeth, that is but a narrow and contracted mind which admires the calm when his vessel is at sea, and the tempest when it is safe in port. Those who shrink from joining in the world and its duties

by degrees fix their minds and affections only upon themselves—a condition, I feel sure, abhorrent to the fine heart my Elizabeth really possesses.”

“You are right, grandmamma. I should hate myself if I was selfish and narrow-minded. But in this fear that I am as yet too young to marry, I think more of—of him than myself.”

“I believe you, darling,” turning her eyes away from the sweet blushing face, which crimsoned at the acknowledgment of a “him” in her thoughts. “He does not think so, Elizabeth—on the contrary, your artlessness is your great charm in his eyes.”

“But, grandmamma, he is so high in the world’s ranks, and I ought to be able to take my place by his side, and—and I know nothing of the world—I do not understand it.”

“’Tis a foolish, sad world, I acknowledge, Elizabeth; the frivolity of it makes one anxious for the future. Does no ambition move you, Elizabeth, to try and make it better? The very height of the position offered you takes you half way towards so grand a duty.”

“No, grandmamma,” murmured the girl, shuddering.

“What is nobler or greater than to see power united to gentleness?—what grander than the life that lives for the future, and takes lessons from the past?—what more striking—more fascinating than a largeness of soul that utterly forgets itself as it regards the meanest of God’s works?”

“Ah! grandmamma, if I could be so happy as to think I could do good——”

“Child, from what source do you expect happiness? Can there be happiness without self-respect?”

“Surely ’tis not wrong to be chary of taking the happiness of others into your keeping?”

“Elizabeth, there is no happiness to be got for yourself but through the medium of others. Lamentable and sad is the state of that person who is in an empty condition of mind—who has no duty to perform for others—who shrinks from responsibility. Many simple pleasures make up life, but the pleasures of duty bring heaven to view.”

“This I acknowledge, grandmamma; and if it is your wish that I should marry, if you think me capable of doing all you say, there is no one—I mean I know no one—oh! grandmamma, perhaps for him and his little son I might strive to be the



creature you portray. With God's blessing I will do my best."

"God's blessing rest on you, my darling! I will candidly confess to you that I have hoped and prayed for this alliance for you, as one excellently suited to you. It is seldom that one sees now, in this giddy, hurrying world, that a calm and steady pursuit of duty is followed. It is my impression that, joined to your sweet ingenuous character, the love and practice of virtue will keep you, like a shining beacon, always before the world, as resisting it, and not being driven by it. You will yourself be astonished at the homage that is paid to virtue, even by the most reckless votaries of pleasure; and must ever bear in mind what an extraordinary, though scarcely perceptible power there is in example. I am glad to see your dear eyes losing their scared look. In a few minutes you must be prepared to meet your future husband as becomes one whom he has crowned with the palm of his love above all her fellows. Forget yourself, love, in remembering him."

But the shy Elizabeth could not belie her nature, and was ready to fly from the room at the idea of seeing him.

"Elizabeth," cried her grandmother, as she al-

most succeeded in reaching the door, "come here a moment, I have a message for you. He is coming to ride with you as usual, so 'tis as well you went to put on your habit. I am also to tell you that you are to keep the secret of your engagement to him as long as you please."

"Oh! grandmamma, how good of him! I own I dread the eyes of the world; but—ah! there is a ring of the bell. I fly to get ready."

She made her escape only just in time. Lord Silborough again looked round for another than old Lady Ellerton.

"She fled," said the old lady, smiling, "as you entered, but with the excuse to put on her habit. But I will so far assist you to have an interview with her, that she will certainly go down to the breakfast-room to feed her little birds. Pray take a book, and go and sit there."

"Thank you, dear Lady Ellerton; but tell me, before I go, are you satisfied with the money arrangements I left for you to look at?"

"To tell you the truth I have not yet read the paper. I have been recalling to my mind all I ever heard of you, my lord, which I should not mention, but that every fresh recollection only made me more happy for my darling's sake!"

"Thank you," he answered, much gratified. "Then I will say no more, but that Lord Ellerton will be here within half an hour, and he has expressed himself as more than pleased with all I propose to do. I will now go to my watch. It is, I assure you, most charming to me to be accepted by you from no motives of grandeur or settlements, and to be obliged to resort to stratagem to get an interview with my shy Elizabeth."

When he was gone, Lady Ellerton glanced at the paper he gave her, and was both astonished and gratified by not only the liberality of the settlements, but the power he gave into the hands of his future wife, as sole guardian and trustee of all his children—thus including the little step-son in addition to any she might have of her own.

"He is very right to trust her," murmured the old lady. "She scarcely knows herself the nobility of her own soul."

Meantime the Lady Elizabeth, so far above little weaknesses, had hurried on her riding-dress, and running swiftly down to her birds, was in the very middle of the breakfast-room before she knew who was there. What passed between them only the birds can tell, but at all events, as Lady Elizabeth mounted her horse, and the difference in her fate

between doing so yesterday and doing it to-day struck her, with the chill and fear of the morning, she was forced to confess to herself that there was somehow an exquisite perception of pleasure in the very midst of her greatest fear and most dismal forebodings. How it occurred that the acute, vigilant hawk eyes of the London world did not notice the unusual blush on Lady Elizabeth's cheek, the additional shyness in her shy eyes, is not for us to say. Perhaps it was due to the superb artifice and indifference of Lord Silborough, whose horror of publicity, we have seen, was as great as that of the timid Elizabeth's. Perhaps it was owing to the circumstance that Nigger had called Fop a fool over-night, and that Fop had consulted Tubs, who again consulted Croppy, who also consulted Skyer, and so on, until all these worthies were wholly absorbed in thinking what Fop had better do to Nigger.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ Oh ! was there ever tale of human love  
Which was not also tale of human tears ?  
Is there no story,  
No legend—no love passage, which shall end  
Even as the bow that God hath bent in heaven.”  
ÆNOLD.

OF course, after the Derby, the world having nothing to think about, were delighted to discover that their high-mightinesses had been so clever as to predict a match, which was now really to take place. They were prepared to amuse themselves with watching the engaged lovers—speculating as to their chance of quarrelling, deciding who ought to be the bridesmaids—and all those little arrangements which are essentially private, but which the world think they have every right to meddle in,—they were prepared for all this, when suddenly the multitude was shaken to its very centre by the abrupt announcement of Lady Rose Alwyn's engagement to Captain Raby of the

Guards—otherwise Gaby, of Gaby-land. And there they were, absolutely before the eyes of everybody, exultantly and jubilantly in love; demanding congratulations, displaying their fondness, and throwing completely into the hum-drum things of the past, the decorous and unobtrusive love-making of the Earl of Silborough and his Elizabeth.

If Lady Rose knew the world, poor little thing, she deceived herself in her present manner of braving it. The direful state of things between Nigger and Fob was wholly forgotten in the excitement occasioned by Lady Rose and Gaby.

“Poor Gaby,” said his friends, “how he laughs, and how happy he looks!—poor devil, it really is too bad. He is so good-natured, is Gaby—one does not like to see him sacrificed from pique. And the worst of it is, he is such a fool, that if one were to tell him, he would most likely try to horsewhip one for doubting his Rosie. Who will take a bet? I’ll bet odds Lady Rose is married before Lady Elizabeth.”

It was after this fashion that his friends talked of Gaby, and discussed Lady Rose’s reasons for accepting him. And it is very much to be feared there was truth at the bottom of it.

Perhaps some of these rumours reached the ears of the amiable, good father, Lord Alwyn—for, in spite of all Lady Alwyn's endeavours to the contrary, he insisted upon having a private interview with his Rosie, and subjecting her little foolish heart to a very severe investigation. Lady Alwyn could only comfort herself with the remembrance that Lady Rose had a spirit and a temper that were both very well able to cope with a much more sagacious though not a kinder heart than Lord Alwyn's. Rose bore her father's probing with a spirit and composure that would have elicited her mother's warmest commendations. But when his voice faltered, when his eyes filled with tears, and he spoke of his own happiness as dependent on that of his children, then poor Rose, being still so young, could only throw her arms round his neck, and indulged herself with a good cry, which of course, though it alarmed papa, had upon her a soothing and beneficial effect.

"I will so far acknowledge to you, papa, that I did like Lord Silborough a little—but now, you know, it will not be right for me to do so; and, therefore, I think it a safe, wise plan to marry dear kind, good Ga—I mean Algy. We all know him so well, and he does so dote upon your little Rosie,

papa. Absolutely he says, if I had not married him he would never have married anyone else!—so nice of him, dear fellow—and I am sure he wouldn't. And his family are so dying for him to be married. And they are all so fond of me, papa, going to them is just like going home."

"All that is very nice, I allow, Rosie, and Mr. Raby has been extremely liberal, not only in his allowance for you both now, but for you, my child, in the future. Nevertheless, Rosie, it has been told me—I have heard it whispered, you are going to marry Algernon Raby out of pique."

"People are so wicked, papa. I do believe the people in London will say anything."

"They are very frivolous and foolish, I allow—I see so few of the young men interesting themselves about politics, or the concerns of philanthropy?"

"It's quite disgusting, papa; they are always thinking of what they are going to eat and drink, and who keeps the best cook, and who gives the finest wine. They ought to leave all that to old things like you, papa, who have not much else left to amuse you."

"Pardon me, my dear, I have almost as much pleasure watching you enjoying what I did, at



your age, as if I still was young, and could delight in it."

"But you are such a good papa—there is no one so kind and good, of that I am sure. So good-bye, you darling old thing. Mamma and I are immensely busy buying my trousseau. I am determined it shall surpass—that is—I am determined there shall never have been a prettier or more tasteful one."

If Lord Alwyn sighed as his giddy little daughter left him, it was not because he doubted her happiness and contentment—it was rather that she lacked something, and what it was he could not bring himself to say. But he heartily prayed God to bless her, and keep her safe from sorrow and trouble. Outwardly she was about to make quite as good a match as he could desire, and it was perfectly true the Raby family welcomed her most warmly. But she was giddy, and Captain Raby foolish. Lord Alwyn got thus far in his thoughts, and then considered it prudent, as he had given his consent to the marriage, to pursue them no further.

To be foolish and in love makes a man commit the wildest extravagances. Gaby and his lady-love, having none of the delicacy of reserve so

conspicuous in the other pair of lovers, took all London into their confidence. And London did not dislike them for it, though they laughed at them.

One or two sacred friends, including Nigger and Tubs, came to see the important ceremony of a golden manacle riveted, with all due importance by Harry Emanuel himself, to the pretty arm of Lady Rose, binding her for ever as the property of Gaby. Merely as a private nuisance always in the way, Lady Rose might be forgiven if she summoned her maidens to see the said manacle unriveted, as being too inconvenient to be borne. But she wore it heroically—boasted of it, and showed it to everyone.

All her friends—all with whom she or Gaby had no more than a bowing acquaintance, were ostentatiously provided with cards to go and view the trousseau.

The wedding-cake was exhibited, with names and crests emblazoned, and all the little packets for the bridesmaids, containing the thimble, the sixpence, and the magic ring, were enveloped in emblazoned covers. A magnificent array of locket, styled the Raby lockets, were to be seen at the Jeweller's by all who cared to look at them.

Lady Rose had a mind to have every pretty girl she knew as bridesmaid. Her father entreated her to limit the number to twenty. 'In his day her mother had but two. Surely the demands of society were not so frightfully exorbitant as to persist in so rapid an increase of bridesmaids? What would his youngest daughter, now aged six, require, when her turn came? But Rose pleaded, "I only expect to be married once, papa, for Gaby is so fearfully strong and healthy, so let me do it well."

"I wish you to do it well, my love; what I fear is, you are doing it ill."

Rose was no metaphysician; she could not reason on the matter. But in truth she desired to hide all want of real love for poor Gaby in this display; and if she considered herself a sacrifice, there should be nothing wanting to make it a splendid spectacle.

The great Silborough match faded into nothing. Nobody heard of the trousseau, nobody saw the cake. Four bridesmaids were the utmost Lady Elizabeth could muster, and they had been told by her to choose their own costume.

"Did you ever hear of such a thing, mamma? I would no more let one of my 'maids' interfere

about her dress, than she should dare to advise me about mine. And I mean to see that they all fit properly."

"Rosie, dear, do not tire yourself any more. I am almost worn out myself, and wish sometimes that you and Algernon would consent to be married without so much fuss."

"Oh! Mamma, how unkind of you; when I am doing my best to let our wedding be the thing of the season—so hugely different from the Silborough one."

"They say he desires it to be quiet, Rose, because of his former marriage."

"I don't believe it, mamma. He likes display, and he is fond of larking, in his heart; 'tis that stupid Elizabeth. Oh! how I do wish I was sometimes in her place!"

"My dear!" cried her mother, aghast.

"I mean nothing wrong, mamma, but it does make me angry to see her so quiescent and dull, when she ought to be so very much the contrary. I declare she is just as simple and ridiculous as when I first spoke to her at the Duchess's concert."

"If she has nothing in her, Rose, she cannot help herself."

"Gaby says she looks like Landseer's lions,

calmly gazing at nothing. Gaby really sometimes is almost clever."

"He is what is much better, the essence of good-humour. He has just taken your little brothers to see the Stodare."

"Mamma, I hope you have got papa to consent to my having the 'Dentelle' veil instead of the other. I know I have been a little extravagant, but to be married in any other sort of veil is really what I could not bring myself to do, considering what a wedding we are going to have."

Lady Rose was so far correct in her opinion of Lady Elizabeth, that all the preparations for her marriage had the effect of numbing and paralyzing her faculties. In the depths of her heart, doubtless, she loved the man she was about to marry. And if he had been of noble nature, but simple birth, if he had had her all to himself, apart from the inquisitive and criticising world, and he could have wooed her among green lanes, in the shelter of shady woods, her shy heart might have opened and expanded. But to be brought forward as the fortunate winner of the great prize of the season, to be always and ever subject to the ordeal of being introduced to new relations, to be consulted about her trousseau, to be troubled about her

wishes, to be the recipient of presents which lost all value because of the thanks to be written and given,—all these troubles and duties made the sensitive and shy Elizabeth shrink deeper within herself. She had a wild wish to get away from it all, which desire possessed her like a nightmare; she felt inextricably caught in the meshes of a net, in which even her grandmother tried to entangle her, and nothing now was left to her but to submit, and she almost thought, die.

One can very well imagine that this strange horror of any change, especially the one she was about to undergo, would attack a heart that, like a rosebud in the east wind, will not unfold its leaves for want of sun. The sensitiveness that now oppressed her was not unnatural in a nature shy and reserved, but full of the noblest qualities, the possession of which was unknown even to herself.

It would have been better, perhaps, had her grandmother taken into consideration the slow budding forth of the flowers of her heart, and foregone the satisfaction of securing the best match of the season, rather than let her marry when she scarcely knew her own mind. The time would have come when, awakened to music by the

carols of the lark, involuntarily moved by the loveliness of the world, the hum of bees, the spirit in the wind, the soul in the flowers, the perfume of the forest, the many and various things of nature that charm the eye and expand the heart, her soul would have risen to the enthusiasm of admiration, and, in doing so, would have burst forth into praise, expanding not only to the love of the Creator, but the humanity of the world. Then if by her side there had wandered a lofty spirit, full of that enthusiasm which leaves nothing between him and God, it had not failed but the pure impulses of her heart would have turned towards him, as the flower to the sun, and as he beamed beneficently on it, would have opened leaf by leaf to thought and love.

But now, the rude brazen gaze of the world chilled all love within her. Lord Silborough, essentially a man of the world, had no higher aspirations than to load her with presents, and gratify himself by the display of his love for the pretty gentle creature that trembled at his touch. There was nothing about him of the nobility of love, which sacrifices for love that which he would die to gain. He did not command the gratitude of Elizabeth, by sparing her any of the ordeals she

most dreaded. On the contrary, he added to her trouble by calling her his "pretty child," his "shy girl," and drew attention to that she most desired to hide. In truth, looking at it in a mere worldly point of view, the sparkling piquante Lady Rose would have suited him better. She only wanted love to turn her frivolous nature into a fine one. Had she been Lady Silborough, her love and ambition gratified together, she would have striven to be worthy of both, and he would have found her the most loving and adoring wife he could desire.

But marriages, though supposed to be made in heaven, often turn out sad mistakes on earth. Lord Silborough has selected Lady Elizabeth to be his wife because it pleased him to possess a wife so unlike the rest of the world. In gratifying this whim, he forgot to ask if she had a heart, and whether she would give it to him. She is persuaded to marry him, spite of an intuition that warns her not to do so. Lady Rose, disappointed in marrying the man she could love, has rushed into the extreme of marrying a man she cannot hate. He marries her from single and true love, and is so far the most honest of the four. It remains for us now to see how Time and Fate treated them. Whether the combined qualities of selfishness,



supineness, giddiness and folly gained the day,  
against the merciful goodness of God, who is for  
ever and ever "delivering us from evil."

## CHAPTER IX.

"Deep tingling pleasure musically hinged,  
 Dropping with starry sparks, goldingly honied,  
 And smelling sweet with the delights of life."

BEDDOES.

THE London season has again come round. Pleasure-seekers are more numerous—more mad than ever. The world appeared to have gone very fast last year—it is going twice as fast this year. Society was frivolous and reckless in 185—, it is a thousand times more reckless and frivolous in 186—. Grave people ask themselves, "Where will all this end?" and before they can answer, they are caught up in the whirl, and twisted and turned, tossed and driven, until they have no brains left to ask themselves anything. There are a few people who make a firm resistance against each mad humour of the town, but nobody cares for their opinion, and as long as they don't stand in the way, they may place themselves pharisaic-

cally apart, and amuse themselves by looking on. Amongst these might be seen the new Countess of Silborough. Amid the former, the Lady Rose Raby.

When people had time to think of the beautiful but silent Lady Silborough, they only gave themselves a moment to say, "If she is handsomer than ever, she is still more apathetic. Never was such a dull creature!" But as for Lady Rose, she became the fashion. Never was seen such a coquettish, winning, sparkling little creature; the very sound of her voice was like sweet laughter. She never moved without a crowd of admiring worshippers; she was at the head of every gaiety, the mover of every amusement, the inventor of "lots of fun"—the pivot on which turned every conceivable change and variety. The Raby bonnet was the rage, Raby mantles, dresses, colours, illumined the shops. To obtain the Raby secret of doing the hair in that marvellous fashion, any Countess was ready to give her coronet. At the balls no one was worth looking at but Lady Rose Raby; wherever she went, she was the observed of all observers—the cynosure of every eye. And all this was to Lady Rose the very breath on which she lived; while Gaby was almost, if it

could be possible, more of a fool than ever with pride and delight.

Lady Rose was too much a woman of the world, though still almost a child, not to know that you cannot gain and keep popularity by merely being the best dressed and most lively companion in London. She was aware of the weakness by which men are seduced to be kept true to the idol they have set up to worship, and there was not in all London such a fascinating, minute establishment as that of Captain and Lady Rose Raby.

"I am so sorry to ask you to such a nutshell," would she say, with her sparkling smile; "but it does not do to offend Père Raby. Père Raby is such a dear old miser. He said this house was big enough for our poor little fortunes, and perhaps it is, because we are quite sorts of paupers, Algy and me; but, then, you know, Père Raby does not often dine with us, so we can have what we like."

And "what we like" was so far from being good for paupers, that there was not a luxury to be had in London for love or money that these two little paupers did not contrive to have. The fame of Lady Rose's little dinners, and Captain Raby's magnificent "drinks"—for the world had

been kind enough to adopt "Sairey Gamp's" phraseology—spread far and wide.

"Do you know," said Lady Rose at one of them, when she had dressed herself in clouds of delicate green tulle, and looked what she intended, a perfect rosebud—"do you know, dear, good Père Raby has heard of my little dinners? He has been so good as to ask himself to dine with us. Of course we are delighted. I have sent for the largest leg of mutton in London, and I think I have heard it said rice pudding is either good with it or after it—I am not sure which. But I must find out, as, of course, I must take every pains to please Père Raby, and do the thing nicely, oughtn't I?"

Everybody present (the Nutshell only accommodated eight) desired to dine with Père Raby, just to see what the large leg of mutton was like, and if the rice pudding resembled something of the sort that they had seen before they went to school.

"No," answered Lady Rose, shaking her little head gravely; "I would oblige you—my whole life is spent in being good-natured—but how can I dine more than four?—I must leave room for the large leg of mutton."

That men found Lady Rose immense fun to

talk to, and had a still greater pleasure in dining with one who knew how to cater so well for them, was an established fact; while the women adored her, when she was good-natured, and gave them some of her cast-off ideas as to dress and colour.

It must be confessed that the gentle Elizabeth had not improved by matrimony, except that she grew handsomer every day. A little tact had been alone wanting, just to make her at ease with her husband; but that tact he omitted, either because he did not know, or did not care to practise it. He had never told her what name to call him, and she had been too timid to ask. She had been brought up to think it not feminine to call people by their surnames; but she only knew from the "Peerage" that her husband's name was Henry—dear and familiar to her, as having been that of her father. She would have liked to call him so, and did so in her secret heart—nay, when she was quietly happy, thinking of him, she went so far as to style him Harry, as she had often heard her grandmother speak of her Harry. In default of any other name, for public use, she was in the habit, with a pretty and graceful accent on the possessive pronoun, of calling him "my lord." He did not dislike it; and though it appeared a little

self and formal at first, it grew more living by the manner in which she said it.

The *Barristers* still being part of the establishment, as shown by her own request as Lady Silborough, she was not called upon to act the part of hostess more than she liked. Her grandmother had warned her, if she was given the choice of having the *Barristers* to live with them, which she could not but know she would be given, not to consent.

"But, grandmamma, if 'my lord' wishes it?"

"He will not wish it, if you do not, Elizabeth."

"I think he will do so, for my sake."

"You must make him understand it will be better for you to have no help in performing your duties as hostess and mistress."

Lady Silborough so far endeavoured to follow her grandmother's advice, that she timidly asked "my lord" if he thought she was capable of fulfilling those most arduous duties without the aid of her sister-in-law?

"Well, my pretty little Lady Timidity, I think not. We will have Audrey and Polly with us—for a year, just to enable you to knock off all that shyness; and I believe their finances will be all the better for a year's recruiting. I know Audrey is

always hinting as to the expense of furnishing."

Elizabeth was only too glad that her inclinations jumped with Lady Audrey's convenience. But what between a sort of punctilio between the two ladies—Lady Audrey leaving things to be settled, as she thought, by Lady Silborough, and Lady Silborough not liking or not caring to interfere at all, the establishment was by no means going on well.

There are now and then to be met with in the world characters who, without being bad, do as much mischief as if they were utterly abandoned. They seem born with a disposition to discourage anything that tends to good; while they have a mischievous propensity to further what is bad or ill-natured. They are not without a code of morality, and a show, if not a feeling of religion; but they are intensely selfish, and devoured by envy. They are without the slightest spark of generous emotion, and generally live in a state of chronic ill-temper and grumbling. Lady Audrey was one of these people, and had not the sense to see that, looking to the future, her wisest course was so to act as to make a permanent friend of her new sister-in-law. But her temper would not permit her to do so.



After living with Lady Silborough for some months, and discovering, as she said privately to her husband, that she had nothing in her, and was absolutely a fool, she became cross and ill-humoured that she had been displaced for a pretty doll. Her husband, as well as her reason, told her that her brother would marry some one, and therefore it was as well, for her sake, that he married a doll, rather than a person like Lady Rose Raby, who would have sent Lady Audrey into permanent banishment had she dared to presume to dictate to her.

"It may be so," she replied; "but really to live with such a piece of inanity—to hear her childish remarks, and to watch her doing what she calls her duty, irritates me beyond measure."

"The fact is, she ought never to have married."

"At least, not until she was sixty, or something of that sort. And she is not without that obstinacy which all fools possess. If she by chance gets an idea into her head, there it will remain, and nothing will drive it out."

"Have you ever had a fight?"

"No; I must do her the justice to say she has a sweet temper, and is remarkably truthful—painfully so. But this is one out of several instances

whereby I judge her to be obstinate. You know, when she first married, how she got herself up into a little sort of excitement about Nugent !”

“Yes, but it appears to have abated.”

“Not so much as we think ; but the truth is, she is so much of a child herself, that Nugent is the cleverest of the two. She is afraid of him. When he comes down to her every day, they stare at each other, and then he begins to ask her questions, to which she can give no reply. He is truly a strange, weird little fellow, and ’tis just as well he does not like his cousins, I am always afraid he will do them some harm.”

“Poor little sickly brat, I will back either of our girls to take him up and throw him out of window.”

“Of course they could do so ; but you generally see children so odd-looking as he is are both spiteful and malicious.”

“Well, do be careful, and don’t quarrel about him. We cannot afford to be turned out.”

“I am quite aware of that, and endure the life of a martyr to keep the peace, which you don’t seem to see.”

“No, I do not see it. Your brother has married a fool, whom you can manage with the slightest possible degree of wisdom. If you have the

sense I gave you credit for, Audrey, you would make yourself so necessary to her that she could not do without you."

"She irritates me so!"

"Oh! if your temper is going to interfere, the sooner I go and look for cheap lodgings the better!"

"For heaven's sake, Buckhurst, don't get into a passion—you forget how nervous I am, and you will not listen when I desire to give you some idea of what I have to endure."

"Go on, then, with your story."

"As I said, she made a show of interest about the boy, and now she is as shy and afraid of him as she might be of you; but nevertheless she is unwearied in looking after his comforts, and his doctor's orders, and all that sort of thing. One day she came to me, red as a rose, and quite excited, saying—'Oh! Audrey, Margaret tells me Mrs. Andrews is very unkind to Nugent.' Her eyes filled with tears. 'Pooh!' I answered. 'What can Margaret know about it?' We had a tremendous argument, she begging me to tell 'my lord,' that Andrews might be dismissed. 'He will never do that. Andrews was poor Sophy's maid, to whom she bequeathed the care of her boy.' 'She is unkind to him,' persisted

Elizabeth. 'It is out of all reason to suppose it. She has a most excellent place, and would be a fool to risk losing it.' 'She is unkind to him!' And such was the whole burden of her song. And, would you believe it, finding I would not interfere, she told 'my lord.' 'My lord' sent for his son, out of whom he could extract not one single word. So of course Andrews remains."

Poor Elizabeth! with the best intentions, she had but aggravated the evil under which her poor little step-son had long suffered. It was perfectly true that Andrews was a harsh and severe woman, and was at times even cruel to the little child so long left in her stern grasp. That he would not tell of her to his father arose from her threats of intimidation. He had had no warranty of his father's love and power, but he had only too bitter proof of his nurse's anger. Lady Audrey's assertion that Elizabeth was shy with her step-son, extraordinary as it may seem, was a fact. He was a plain, uncouth little fellow, with nothing remarkable about him but a pair of large, clear eyes. These eyes, gazing at her through and through, with that sort of boldness with which children try to read a new face, abashed Elizabeth. She had pictured him to herself as a fair baby-boy, to whom she

might sing and prattle. He did not care for music, he said, but begged she would read him the debates. He asked her a variety of questions as to her interest in the Reform-bill, her opinion of different public men, to none of which could the simple, untutored step-mother give what he considered a reasonable answer. She had meant to give him love, love in full measure. It appeared he did not require love. He had never had it, and could live without it. He had been accustomed to amuse himself, and was happy after his fashion. A strange little mortal, not more than eight years old, but so small and sickly as to appear much younger. It was a shock to Elizabeth, the severity of which she hardly knew herself, to find this child, whose love she had fondly hoped would bring her so much happiness, was indifferent even to have what she was anxious to bestow on him.

## CHAPTER X.

"Aye, where's my money? That's a puzzling querie.  
It vanishes, yet neither in my purse  
Nor in my pockets are there any holes. 'Tis very  
Incomprehensible."

FRANK GAUDREY.

THUS the establishment of Silborough House was by no means on so comfortable a footing as the little Raby Nutshell. If Lord Silborough fancied that he had made a mistake in marrying Lady Elizabeth Ellerton, he showed no sign of it. On the contrary, he was very proud of her, and was delighted to receive compliments, both on her beauty and refinement.

"Sil does not in the least care whether she opens her lips or not, Buckhurst," said his wife. "Ever since he has heard from the highest authority that Lady Silborough is the most beautiful specimen of high breeding that has been seen for years, he will not care how dull she is. Only to-day I was tell-

ing him of the *éclât* and wonderful success of Rose Raby, and he answered,

"Pooh ! a ridiculous little goose ; she will have her husband in jail, and herself in the Divorce Court, in a year or two. I hate people trying to push themselves up out of their proper position."

"I gather from that speech, Audrey, that Sil does care for notoriety, and is perhaps a little sore at the success of Lady Rose. But one thing is certain, he cannot have the two. Our piece of solemn loveliness could never lend herself to the display and larkisms of that wild Rose."

"She is again bothering herself and me about Andrews, and has requested the old Duchess to interfere."

"She must have something to amuse her. Why not let her have her own way about Andrews?"

"Because all the trouble and bother of that disagreeable boy will be thrust on me, I feel sure—and because I don't choose, when I put up with her stupidity, that she should be obstinate about anything. She ought to be satisfied with what I say to her."

"Audrey, pray do let me warn you not to give way to temper ; you will get the worst of it, pitted against one who does not seem to know what temper is."

"It is useless your talking to me ; I hate her, and I believe she knows it."

"Audrey, Audrey, be reasonable. I feel sure you have already gone to great lengths, of which you dare not tell me."

"And I had good reason to do so. Sil came to me in a great passion about some domestic bother, and I gently answered his rudeness, saying, 'It must be some order of Lady Silborough's,' and he as good as gave me the lie direct. And then he sent for her, and she came with that childish face of hers, all in a glow, to do something to please him ; and then somehow it all came out that no one had looked after anything, and there was complete disorganization, the servants excusing themselves, saying first one lie and then another. Upon which Sil upbraided me, saying if I undertook to manage his house I ought to do it—and one word after another went on, and the stupid creature burst into tears. Also, in the excitement of the moment, she flung her arms round Sil's neck. He was so delighted with her show of feeling, or whatever it was, that he carried her off, and forgot me altogether. In the evening she came to me and said, 'She knew I was so much occupied, that if I pleased she would try and take her proper place.



She was not unaccustomed to ordering and ruling, as her grandmamma made her do so at home ; only she thought I liked it.' Of course I was not going to submit to this, but told her plainly she was perfectly unfitted to do it. Upon which she replied, with many blushes, 'My lord had told her she must do it.' 'That is,' said I, 'you persuaded him to try and turn me out.'"

"Audrey, Audrey ! what a frightful temper you have got ! You will ruin us !"

"But only listen to her reply. In the calmest manner she said, 'No, Audrey, you will have turned yourself out.'"

"Just as I think, Audrey."

"You would not have had me submit to a reproof from such a child as that. 'No,' I replied, 'I shall go to Silborough myself.' Her face brightened so much at the idea that I did not go. However, she is, with her usual obstinacy, doing what she says he told her to do—taking the rule of everything into her own hands."

"I consider that you owe this entirely to yourself, Audrey."

"You are very unkind, Buckhurst ; but one thing is very certain—I don't intend to let her rule in peace."

"I tell you candidly, if by your means we are obliged to seek another home, I shall apply for foreign service, and I think it will be pretty certain that I shall leave my wife and family at home!"

This threat sank deeply into the heart of Lady Audrey, and compelled her to put some control on her temper.

Meantime, the old Duchess of Stradarven had her great-grandson up to town with Andrews. She so far entered into the feelings of the young step-mother, that she did not care to produce any ill-will by interference, and as it was not the first time he had paid her a visit, the invitation was not unnatural. Nevertheless, Andrews was fully aware she was suspected, and acted accordingly. The poor little fellow was not one of those pretty, demonstrative children that win all hearts by their sweet artlessness and love. Apparently he had no affections whatever, and occupied himself principally about things that belonged more to men than even school-boys. It was on account of the precociousness of his intellect that he was ordered to have no governess or tutor. He was to educate himself, so the doctor said, until his feeble frame could better support his amount of brains.

His greatest ambition was to go to school.

"Are you not afraid other boys will laugh at you for being so small?" asked his grandmother.

"They may laugh," he replied, carelessly—"some of these days I shall laugh at them."

"Are you not pleased to have so pretty a mother?"

He raised his large, searching eyes to his grandmother, who repeated her question before he would reply,

"Was my own mother as pretty?"

"No, there is rarely seen anyone so pretty as your new mother."

He laughed, half elfishly.

"She kisses me as if she loved me. She comes at night, when I am in bed. Oh! I watch her!"

"Boy, what can you mean?" said his grandmother, horrified at his manner.

"I don't mean anything. I like her to kiss me in the day-time, and I like to look at her, and I think her very pretty indeed." And a sort of sad, troubled look came into his little wan face. But as for extracting anything out of him regarding Andrews, he was as mute with his grandmother as with his father.

Meantime, the season drew to an end. London

was beginning to tire of gaiety and frivolity. A longing for country air, for new scenes, for some other amusements than those afforded by hot, dusty, noisy, crowded London, attacked everybody like an epidemic, and it became the fashion to hurry out of town with all speed. The monstrous crowd scattered themselves in all directions. Some went to the seaside, some to their country seats, some abroad, and some travelling through the mountains and valleys of their native countries. The Nutshell was shut up in good time, and having worthily earned popularity, the Rabys had invitations sufficient to last for six months.

"Monstrous lucky, Rose, darling, for I haven't a dump left."

"Oh! Gaby, what have you done with all our money? I shall want to set myself up in no end of pretty autumn things."

"Done with the money, my pet?—why, of course, we couldn't keep house on nothing. By Jove! how the men do rave about your little dinners, Rosie!"

"Oh! that's all very well; but, you know, we cannot get on without money. It's quite ridiculous to go about poor. We are going to two sets of races, and you will want to bet, and so shall I.

Do go and ask your father if he could not help us a little."

"I wish you would ask him instead of me, Rose, darling. He will swear at me, lecture me, and then give me nothing. Now, even if he refuses you, he will neither swear at nor lecture you."

"Well, Gaby, I will go to your father if you will go to mine. Somehow, I can't stand dear papa's eyes, and I know he has had a good deal to pay this year for Wyn's commission."

"Of course, Rosie—I will do whatever you wish ; but, somehow, it seems odd we should be in debt, and not married a year."

"Pooh ! Gaby, what are you thinking of ? We were very inexperienced, and did not know what we were doing. Next year we shall know better. Besides, if we get a pretty good sum out of each, we can lay it by for next year, or speculate with it. They say that's the greatest fun. I have always had a longing to go down to 'Change,' and try my wits against all the knowing ones there."

"And of course there would not be any one there half so clever as my own darling."

"Begone, you goose ! You know, Gaby, I cannot bear to be kissed when I am nicely dressed. I

am always obliged to go upstairs to put myself tidy after one of your boisterous salutes."

Thus rebuked, Gaby departed on his errand; and of course, not being clever, Lord Alwyn soon abstracted from him how their money had made itself wings and flown away.

"Five hundred pounds for wine! Algernon, surely you must be mistaken?"

"Four hundred and ninety-seven pounds is very near the mark; and I only paid it yesterday."

"And only for four months?"

"Five, my lord—quite five; a hundred pounds a month. It seems a good deal, doesn't it?" and the innocent Gaby looked at his father-in-law with as much sagaciousness as he could muster.

"It is monstrous—most monstrous!"

"We did not drink it all ourselves, you know. Rosie is fond of little parties, and would have the best wine."

Lord Alwyn had not to be told that Rosie was somewhat wilful. But he considered it his duty to do what Gaby abhorred—namely, administer a severe lecture.

"No two young people ever started under better auspices than you two; and it is really a matter of the deepest concern to me, that before the first year

of your marriage is over, you should be distressed for money."

"Oh!" interrupted Gaby, "don't think of me—I will do without anything; but poor little Rosie, she is so fond of pretty things—just a hundred pounds or so to set her up."

"Algernon," said his father-in-law sternly, "don't let me regret having given my little young giddy girl to a man who does not know how to manage her. I will give you a cheque for one hundred pounds, on condition that you take care it is only spent in the absolute expenses of the various visits you are about to pay. You are not in debt as yet; and with no housekeeping expenses, you can manage very well—but above everything, keep Rose in order."

Much more had poor Gaby to listen to before he got his cheque; and he began mentally to think he had better have gone to his father, as a lesser evil of the two.

His darling Rose returned from her expedition with exactly the same amount; and being, as we said before, clever and shrewd, she thought it best to make a merit of necessity, and go about in what she called a state of pauperism. Nevertheless, she spent her hundred pounds in pretty things; and

Gaby had to economise as best he could with the other. But before she left town, Rosie had to undergo an ordeal from her mother, who, having sown "dragon's teeth," was perfectly amazed at the crop they produced.

"Rose, my dear, sweet child, don't think I am come from papa to upbraid you because of all those terrible bills, and that horrid quantity of wine. I want to warn you that it is said in very, very high quarters that you are a very jolly little thing, but that you are going too fast. Do, Rose, be careful, now that you are going to other people's houses. I can assure you that, much as London is given to gossip and scandal, nothing equals a country house for spreading a bad report. The gentlemen are out all day fishing, shooting, or hunting; the women are left very much to themselves—consequently they quarrel. And it is inconceivable what falsehoods they tell of each other."

"I don't see, mamma, what is the object of all this tirade. I am very well able to take care of myself, as you know. Didn't I choose Gaby to go with me to that party where every one else had anybody but their husbands."

"Fie, fie! Rose; rather be ashamed you went at all. It is for your sisters' sakes I do beg you



to be a little more quiet. Adelaide comes out next year, and I will be greatly against her settling well if you get a name for being lost—and all that."

Rose was fond of her sisters, and though she would not give her mother the satisfaction of knowing it, because she resented her advice, still she meant to be extremely good. And provided she was always the best-dressed person in the room, she would not care so much for being the fastest. So the newspapers announced "Captain and Lady Rose Bury leave town for the Marquis of —'s seat; Earl and Countess Silborough, accompanied by the Hon. Lullington and Lady Audrey Buckhurst, for Silborough Castle."

## CHAPTER XI.

"She is of the best blood, but betters it  
 With all the graces of an excellent spirit ;  
 Mild as the infant Rose, and innocent  
 As when Heaven lent her us. Her mind as well  
 As face is yet a Paradise untainted  
 With blemishes—or the spreading weeds of Vice."

ROBERT BARON.

SILBOROUGH CASTLE was a home that  
 could not fail to rouse and delight the  
 most apathetic nature. Placed on a commanding  
 position, it looked down upon a broad valley of  
 silvan beauty that combined every attraction of  
 nature. A lovely winding river enlivened it ; rising  
 knolls of ground, rich with the bright hues of  
 pasturage and ripening corn, were surmounted by  
 hills clothed with woods, in which nestled pretty  
 rural homes, farmsteads, and every sign of popula-  
 tion and fertility. If Lord Silborough could with  
 pride say that all he looked upon was his own, with  
 still more pride he could congratulate himself that

he enhanced the beauty of his domain by sharing it with others. The natural charms of the landscape were perfected by the variety, neatness, and order of the little hamlets, with their churches embosomed in yew-trees, with the mansions of well-to-do people, the pretty villas, and the snug cottages.

In the magnificent grounds belonging to the Castle many beautiful peeps, and rural pictures, framed by the boles and spreading branches of oak and beech-trees, presented themselves to the lovers of what was lovely. And as the young Countess meandered through one beautiful walk after another, it seemed as if nature spoke to her heart, filling it with a strange longing that her life might be like the scene before her—beautiful and beneficent.

“Am I to think myself unworthy of all this beauty, this rare mixture of exquisite delights, because I am a weak, feeble mortal?” She said this to herself, but, alas! the very springing, unfolding of her heart to nature seemed to crush and paralyze it when she thought of those with whom she lived. Of the Buckhursts it could only be said that she strove to think of them as little as possible. Her refined nature shrunk from one so strangely moved by ill-temper and envy as was the nature of

Lady Audrey, and with Mr. Buckhurst she had not an idea in common. She longed for the company of her grandmother, to whom she felt she could talk of the feelings now moving her, but she feared that her love and anxiety for her would soon penetrate the annoyance she was undergoing at the hands of Lady Audrey. Her heart was too loyal to let anyone suspect the indignities this stupid woman, blind to her own interests, put upon her.

It was also in some measure for this reason that she forbore to take a wife's privilege, and speak with wifely love and confidence to her husband of the many new thoughts that were unfolding, like the leaves of a flower, in her mind. To see her speak to Lord Silborough, to know that she was beginning to turn to him for happiness, unthwarted by painful shyness, were circumstances that galled Lady Audrey beyond control. And because the gentle creature bandied no words with her, silently submitted to the most foolish, base accusations, Lady Audrey fell into the common mistake of thinking her still a fool; whereas her infatuated temper was rousing Elizabeth to understand and comprehend the nobility of forbearance. It needed but one active virtue to enter into her

would be open to her the admission of all that was offered to her reason and choice. Nevertheless Lady Silborough was approaching the outlines of a dangerous temptation—it was the subtle and deceiving pleasure of martyrdom. She began to wonder if her patience and quietness would not shame Lady Audrey into reason and good-humour. Neither was she without some feeling of the same kind towards her husband, and the numerous guests that were coming and going during the whole winter. She forgot that, unless she told him, Lord Silborough could not perceive the inward thoughts that began throbbing so quickly at her heart. Besides, Lord Silborough at home and Lord Silborough in London were very different people.

At home he was an autocrat. He was served as a king—he nodded, and the world about him obeyed. He was always employed governing his kingdom, enjoying it, revelling in its riches and pleasures. He felt royal, and little trifles had no place in his thoughts. He went out, and gazed at his large array of subjects. He organized a mass, and had to think of the wants of many. Thus the small company that formed his household were but little in his thoughts; they were his kingdom when in London, where being an atom, perhaps a

little bigger than some others, but still only an atom, he was glad to be interested and amused in it. His business in London was to forget himself in the crowd; his business at home was to make himself visible and necessary to all. Therefore Elizabeth saw but little of him, and was as yet too inexperienced to account for this.

Their guests were, with very few exceptions, indifferent to trying to like their shy hostess; the more so, as the unscrupulous nature of Lady Audrey did not fail, by insinuations, by, it must be feared, false statements, and all that array of flagrant sin that may be committed in breaking the ninth commandment—to prejudice her visitors against her.

Thus, with a growing disposition to break forth from her shyness—with a desire to please and be pleased—with a beginning of what may be called the enthusiasm of goodness stirring her, bidding her enjoy and participate in pleasant conversation, in social duties, and amusing gatherings, Elizabeth found, as it were, the door barred against her.

Having known and seen her only as a beautiful automaton—swayed by the insidious whispers of Lady Audrey—occupied by their own whims and

wishes, and steeped to the lips in luscious pleasure and idleness—there was not one who cared to stretch forth an indolent hand to help her over the boundary that kept her from them. She was too timid to beseech an entrance—too proud naturally to force one.

And so it was in this manner that somehow the idea entered her mind that she was a victim. Lord Silborough was content that his house was beautifully organised by the wife that was supposed to be a fool.

“She is so extraordinarily obstinate,” murmured Lady Audrey, low, to a circle of lady guests, “that because Sil happened to suggest that she had better do something, she took the rule of everything quite out of my hands. And she won’t even act, much less take the least advice from me. I may offer, and work, and write, and slave, she will do everything after her own fashion, just as if it seemed she wanted to annoy me.”

“Everything is remarkably well done; my maid says she has never been anywhere where the least servant’s comfort is so well considered.”

“Well! I can only say I am always thankful to hear some good of her; and it is so far only what one might expect of a person who has not an

idea but what has been taught, and she has been well taught."

"It is those kind of people, who are not distracted by genius or talent, that do, what they engage to do, so well," observed a lady, who was most certainly excusing herself.

"How proud Lord Silborough is of her beauty! How sorry he will be, if he has a son, that he is not his heir, instead of that ugly little strange boy," said another.

"Now that is another thing so odd of her; she does not seem to me to have the least pleasure in the thought of having a child. She absolutely turns pale whenever the subject is mentioned."

"She seems very timid and nervous."

"Don't laugh, my dear, when I tell you this: but one day, when I thought it best to give her a good scolding for her foolish fears, she answered, 'The Bible teaches me to fear it. The symbols of pangs, terror, and anguish throughout it, are all taken from that which I am to bear. I cannot think of it lightly.'"

"How odd! how strange! as if no one had ever endured it before."

Such were the exclamations of those who could not understand the mixed feelings of apprehension

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and hope, with which the sensitive Elizabeth was about to meet her woman's curse.

Taking everything into consideration, Lady Silborough must be pardoned if she lived in a crowd, yet stood alone—if she was the head of a sociable, chattering, pleasure-seeking set of people, and still had no part in the sociability, and endured more pain than pleasure. The people filling the country homes of England were only bits of the society of London, cast down in sundry parts of the earth. Thither they carried with them the follies, nonsense, we fear, vices of London. To be sure, the healthy country breeze, the manly enticing sports, the various delights of nature, were not without their influence in freeing the soul from the luxurious baseness and superficiality of mind that both fetter alike that which they called life. A sorry life—dead in deed, in thought, in the present and the future. Unhappy happiness, gone before it is tasted—vanished before it is grasped!

Lady Silborough, thus in a manner tabooed from intercourse with those amongst whom she lived, and yearning for some sympathy, took refuge in books. She fancied from them she should learn how to become like other people. Under the too careful training of her grandmother and Miss

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Cheverill, she had read but little of fiction. She now delivered herself up to the charm of novels and romances, thinking to learn in their pages how to become a fashionable woman and an agreeable companion. Without absolutely absorbing her ideality in books, of which many revolted her good taste, she yet found an infinite solace in them. She could forget the caustic and ill-tempered bickerings of Lady Audrey, in following the fortunes of a heroine whose fine character roused her warmest sympathies and admiration. And she did not remember her woman's curse, as she read of the strange trials and painful vicissitudes of some noble heart. She felt herself insignificant and foolish in comparison. But to read novels from morning till night deteriorates the character, and of luxurious idleness you may easily have more than is good for you.

Elizabeth began to experience the throes of some inward conscience as to the falsity of the luscious peace into which she was now plunged. She felt a moral decrepitude numbing her faculties, and while she acknowledged the power of this secret monitor, she had neither the desire nor the strength to resist it.

And so the winter passed, and London was

again prepared to receive its legions of pleasure-seekers. Fast and furious they hurried in from all parts of the world, each asking the other "what somebody was going to give," by way of amusement, so that they might begin to reckon up at once the amount of pleasure they were likely to have.

London, having turned its houses all inside out, now restored them to a proper condition, and the roar of the multitude began to make itself heard.

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## CHAPTER XII.

“ Her speech is nothing,  
 Yet the unshaped use of it doth move  
 The hearers to collection ; they aim at it,  
 And botch the words up to fit their own thoughts,  
 Which as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them  
 Indeed would make one think, there might be thought,  
 Though nothing sure, yet much, unhappily.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ **W**HERE in the world is Lady Silborough ?”  
 asked Lady Rose, armed with a thousand  
 new prettinesses, whims, and conceits, to take the  
 London world by storm, and rule it, as she had  
 done the season before.

“ Don’t you know, she is obliged to stop at home  
 on account of a domestic event.”

“ Just like her ; if she can do a foolish thing she  
 will. I took very good care to get that disagreeable  
 business over in November, just when nothing  
 particular was going on. I went to Alwyn, told  
 mamma, who was awfully surprised and so angry  
 I had not informed her before—and so nervous

because my waist was still so small (as if I would spoil my waist for the prettiest brat ever born), that altogether I never had such fun in my life. But, however, I told her the thing must be got over at Alwyn, as I had no other place to go to, and we were too poor to open the Nutshell; besides, Gaby would have bored me so there. Having nothing to do, I felt sure he would be always hanging over me, fearing this and apprehending that."

"And they took you in?"

"Oh! of course; but it was rather inconvenient. Papa had just made up a long quarrel with his hot-headed Welsh cousins, the Wyns, and they were at Alwyn on a visit, and of course they had all to turn out, and that at very little notice, for I had scarce left myself a moment, it was so pleasant down at F—— Castle. And then there was a nurse to get, and of course clothes. Mamma thought I had forgotten all about them, but it was a piece of diplomacy on my part, which succeeded admirably. She ordered them, and of course paid for them; poor Gaby and I are such paupers."

"But where is your baby?—I should like to see it."

"You must go down to Alwyn, then, for I left it there. I believe it's a boy, but upon my word I sometimes forget, for Gaby bothered me so about

having a girl just like myself, that I made up my mind it would be a girl, and I cannot get the idea out of my head; and I suppose I shan't, until I see it in knickerbockers. They are all delighted to have it at Alwyn, the old nurse especially, who says she is never so pleased or so well as when she has a baby on hand. And I am sure nothing pleases me more than to please others, so we are all pleased together."

Thus did Lady Rose rattle on. Lady Audrey and the Hon. Buckhurst took sole possession of Silborough House, and her peevish, discontented face almost wore a smile on it at the delight of doing so. Separated from the object that she wickedly made her *bête noir*, Mr. Buckhurst found her somewhat more amenable to his advice. He took infinite pains to show her what an excellent opportunity this was for her to make herself once more necessary to the comfort of her brother. He quite agreed with her that Lady Silborough was a fool, but he was much mistaken if she had ever done so foolish a thing as to have a "domestic event" at such an inconvenient time. Sil had said that the moment she was all safe he should come to town, and leave her to be nursed well again by old Lady Ellerton and Miss Cheverill.

both of whom had offered their services as nurses. "Then, Audrey, you will have a fair course, and may run in and win."

Thus pandering to her hatred, crediting her with discretion, and flattering her into good-humour, he so far got possession of the rudder of that unwieldy, mismanaged, overballasted thing she called her heart, as to keep it in some degrees of control. She entered into all his schemes with exceeding relish and obedience ; she even went so far as to court the society of one or two people who, set on high as the fashion, ought to have been trampled out of sight as the disgrace of London. Hitherto Lady Audrey had looked on, envying, perhaps, the imperturbable composure and nonchalance of various respectable people who tolerated the society of those they spoke of as lower than the dirt beneath their feet, simply because they were "the fashion." It became an understood thing a party was not the party without them, and so these respectable people concluded it was better to go with the tide rather than have the awful slur attached to their names of not being in the fashion. Lady Audrey had piqued herself in former days as being so high among the "Upper Ten Thousand," she could do

as she pleased. Now, having a little private hatred to avenge, she stooped in the desire to conquer.

Without for one moment placing pretty, sparkling, fast Lady Rose in any questionable position, still Lady Audrey had put the little thing down in her visiting list as too fast for her. Now it was different. She courted Lady Rose with every conceivable art, and, alas for Lady Rose, without caring one jot for the unlovely, uninteresting, sour woman, she yet received her advances with bewildering pleasure and joy. Did nothing whisper to her of danger? It mattered not what whispered to the conscience of either; they became such bosom friends, that if Lady Rose was not in Silborough House, Lady Audrey was at the Nutshell, and *vice versa*.

And so London began its old ways, resolute only in this—to be more fast, more reckless, more mad than ever. Few had time to pause and see that they were undergoing the same temptation as Adam. Fruit was offered to their sight which they knew it was ruin to touch, death to taste—a moral death, the close of which angels weep to see. All dashed recklessly at it, many touched, few refused to taste, until but one motive ruled the world, and that was to be in the fashion.



When Lord Silborough arrived in town, in the happiest spirits at the well-doing of his Countess, and the birth of a daughter, he found London in the full humour to employ those spirits. The Buckhursts had begged him to consider themselves as caterers for his amusement, as naturally he would be running out of town once a week, to see after his pretty Elizabeth, and so would not feel altogether as settled as if he was in town.

Under the able generalship of Mr. Buckhurst, and the valuable assistance of Lady Rose Raby, Lord Silborough took part in several of the most lively and jolly entertainments of the year. They were not exactly parties to which he would have taken his countess, but being in town *en garçon*, naturally there was no harm in his accepting them, and enjoying himself; especially as he rather plumed himself upon the affection and duty that had kept him so long in the country. His timid and gentle Elizabeth was so dependent on him to keep up her spirits.

It is not altogether fair for well-regulated minds and sober dispositions to pass judgment upon the spoilt temper and flighty thoughts of little butterfly things such as Lady Rose. 'Tis true, in point of worldly wisdom, we have seen she was very acute.

But where a person's own feelings are concerned, especially when the enthusiasm of youth overthrows even the commands of prudence, it is not fair to judge of their temptations by those of others.

Lady Rose had reached that stage of her existence at which she felt almost forlorn for want of something to excite her. Poor Gaby, the most amiable and sweet-tempered of mortals, absolutely had the same effect upon her as an overdose of sugar-plums has upon children. She was almost sick of his amiability and imperturbable good-temper. Once he did enliven her a little, by positively refusing her advice to borrow money of the Jews.

"No; I promised my father I never would go to the Jews."

"Why go to a Jew? Christians lend as well as Jews!"

"But my promise was, not to borrow money."

"Then I will do so, instead of you."

"No, no, Rosie, my darling! The fact is, we must not give parties this year, as we did last year. After all, nobody thanks one for it."

"Moralizing, Gaby—moralizing! What fun it will be to tell everybody!"

"Make as much fun of me as you like, darling, so long as you are amused and happy."

"But how can I be amused and happy, if I cannot be first in everything, as I was last year?"

"You are the best dressed woman in London, and the merriest; be content with that, Rose."

"And you positively won't borrow any money?"

"I must keep my promise."

"Then I won't speak to you for a fortnight; and I will tell everybody the reason."

Not speaking to Gaby for a fortnight gave Lady Rose a little mawkish amusement for a short time. It was such fun to have to ask other people to tell him what she wanted him to do. But when that was over, she again felt low, and moped. The friendship of Lady Audrey was therefore snatched at as a godsend. Her poor little thoughts might be analysed somewhat after this fashion:

"Though I think no one now, of course, so good as my Gaby, and at times I can't help being very fond of him, yet I should like to know whether I have got any of that odd feeling left that I used to have for Lord Silborough. I declare I used to know quite well when he came into the room, even if I did not see him. Which is, I suppose, electro-biology, or something to do with spirits, which only happens between sympathetic natures. And then my heart beat, as it never

beats now, unless I am in a passion. I should like just to see if he cares for anything I say. What a triumph for me, if I can get him into the least bit of a flirtation, after having, as it were, rejected me for that stately doll. Lots of people have told me I am very much the prettiest. Heigho! I half wish I was in the school-room again. Somehow things are not altogether as nice as I expected when I was so dying to come out. Lady Audrey would like me just to laugh and amuse Lord Silborough, because she says he is so moped at home, and is becoming quite stupid in consequence. 'He married quite the wrong person,' she said. I wonder what she meant by that? Poor dear papa does not like me going on as I do—and, oh, law! if he was to see me when I do go on. Well, I must not vex him, he is so kind. Only this morning he came to see me; and hearing, he said, that I was to be Hebe in the *Tableaux*, he thought I might like to look nice—and if the darling did not give me a cheque for one hundred pounds! Dear, dear papa, I hope I shall never vex you! I hope I shall always be thinking of you, and when I am feeling, just a little, as if I hated Gaby and all the world—I wonder how people feel who are really good, and do stupid, good, proper things—

go to church, become sisters of something, and all that. Fancy me a sister of something! I see myself clothed in calico and gingham. I will tell Campbell to find out what the dress is; she shall make me one, and I will just put it on some evening to startle them."

Such were a few of the thoughts of this wayward little heart. Campbell made her so becoming a sister's dress, that, confiding in Lady Audrey, she took it with her to Silborough House, where she was going to dine. At dinner, like a fairy in gossamer robes of pink and silver, she was inimitably pretty and bewitching, so that no admirer of beauty, like Lord Silborough, could fail to gaze at her with pleasure.

But when, after dinner, the gentlemen came into the drawing-room, they were still more struck by the extreme loveliness of a demure little quakerish thing, that sat like a piece of rare old china on a low seat, from behind which rose a pyramid of ferns and green leaves. Lady Audrey introduced her as Miss Smith, a sister of some charity, who had called to ask for contributions to her sisterhood.

"I detained her," continued Lady Audrey, significantly, "because I thought, Sil, you would give her more if she asked you herself."

Lord Silborough so far agreed with his sister, that he would have given her nothing without seeing her, and was ready to give her anything now he had seen her. The modest eyes of the little sister were never raised while she gravely and piously set forth her wants and wishes. A collection was made immediately, each man striving to outdo the other. Her thanks were simple and earnest, and she put all her riches slowly and carefully away in the pocket of her little stuff dress. Which business being completed, she suddenly raised her eyes, and flashed out into the well-known laugh and merriment of Lady Rose.

"I shall keep all my contributions," said she, after they were all tired of wondering, laughing, and complimenting; "and I shall spend them in buying myself something immensely pretty, just to put me in mind of having hoaxed you all so well. I never had such fun in my life."

"Rosie," said Gaby, when they were back at their Nutshell, worn out with excitement, and the luxury of laughing, "what do you think Sil said of you in that absurd little dress?"

"Something very unkind, I suppose."

"By no means. He said you did not know how infinitely more it became you to be dressed simply,

with your face in repose. His wife, he added, was infinitely improved by animation and dress, but by no means to the extent that you were by becoming a demure little sister. 'I can fancy,' he continued, 'a man sacrificing everything for such a creature—absolutely happy to die to do her service.' There, my own darling, there was a compliment from the best judge of beauty in London! Why, Rose, my sweetest, loveliest Rose, crying?"

"I am so tired, you great booby! One can't go on for ever entertaining the whole of London without getting knocked up. Don't speak to me again, sir, and let me go to sleep."

And poor dear good Gaby did as he was bid.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“That we would do,  
We should do when we would ; for this world changes,  
And hath abatements and delays as many  
As there are tongues—are hands—are accidents.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“MY dearest, it is about time that you should consider yourself well. Your husband has been very good, wanting you, as I am sure he must, in London.”

“I fell quite well, grandmamma ; the only thing I do not like is losing your company.”

“I am glad to hear you acknowledge that this is your only objection to again taking your place in society.”

“A sick-bed, dear grandmamma, brings diseases of the heart very plainly to view. I am almost ashamed to confess to you how much I felt unlike, before my baby was born, the Elizabeth you loved and praised eighteen months ago.”



"No woman ought lightly to meet such a time, Elizabeth. It is certain there is nothing between her and death but the mercy of God."

"I was very apprehensive, but I fear more because of the mortal pangs I had perhaps to undergo. But when I felt the faintness of exhaustion stealing over my senses, and that light was fading from my eyes, and strength from my limbs, there rose vividly before my mental vision a sort of figure of death, and I was horror-stricken at the thought of having feared bodily pain, and never considered the awfulness of death. I experienced grief so sharp in my mind, that the pain was nothing to it—grief that I had spent, as it now appeared to me, the last few precious months of my life in reading novels, and in doing everything I possibly could to drive all thought away."

"It is wonderful the rapidity of thought, Elizabeth, and the sort of way in which it sorts and arranges itself, to suit the moment of time allotted for its power."

"It certainly could be but a moment of time that these thoughts occurred—at least, just at the period of going off into a swoon; and yet what I have told you, grandmamma, was absolutely but a particle of all that passed through my mind. My

childish life, my still more childish youth, my marriage, the dislike to it, and all your kind advice to me. The sort of weak way in which I took refuge from all I disliked, behind my shyness; and what was almost wicked, my dearest grandmamma, I had lately been thinking I so little understood people, or they me, that perhaps it was almost better if I did die."

"Ah! my child, there is not a greater mistake in the world than to get into the habit of thinking yourself a victim. I am sure your case was not a bad one, otherwise I can soon prove to you, if you still consider yourself a victim, you have yourself placed yourself in the position."

"Doubtless, grandmamma, for on the mere sight of this figure of death—on the sort of shudder that ran through me, as it approached nearer, and I feared it would touch me such a flood of remorse filled my heart, that the short time I was in the world I had done so little, cared for so little, and had so conducted myself, that, like a leaf off a tree, I should be swept away, out of men's minds and memory, as a thing as valueless."

"It is when death approaches, Elizabeth, that we are often reminded how much we ill-use the gift of life?"

"Which I have done, hitherto. Your love, so ill requited, so little done for my husband—beyond being an obedient, simple companion—my poor little Nugent, whom the more I think of, the more do I know I ought to have taken under my entire charge long ago."

"You are right, my dear Elizabeth. There has been some treacherous, not to say wicked influence exercised over the poor little fellow. His strange behaviour on hearing your little baby was a girl, and the love he seems to feel for it; the shudder that came over him when Margaret asked him if he would not have preferred a brother to play with—my dear Elizabeth, at all hazards, your first duty must now be to learn, by all means that you can, what sort of a woman Andrews really is."

"I will do so; the more so as, even if I could bring myself to question him, I feel sure he would give no reply. His extraordinary, most obstinate silence, on a former occasion, absolutely was a sort of intuition to me that all was not right. And yet, grandmamma, I was so blameworthy as to do nothing."

"He is too sickly in appearance to be well-managed by her, though it is against her interest to let him absolutely die!"

"Oh! grandmma, die!—you horrify me. What can make you fear this?"

"The idea only came into my head yesterday, Elizabeth. If you remember, when he was with us yesterday morning, he had a very dull, stupid look. His eyes, usually so brilliant and keen, were glazed. He sat down for some time as if recalling his senses, and, if you remember, he fell off the stool fast asleep. You picked him up, laid him on the sofa, kissing him; as you did so, you said, 'What a strange smell!' When you left the room I went near him, and the odour that came from between his almost clenched lips was like that of laudanum."

"Oh! grandmamma, poison! It is impossible—why should she do so?"

"To keep him quiet during the night."

"He shall sleep in my room; he shall not leave me again for a moment."

"But if you notice, he will never be a moment alone with you."

"It is true he seems then to have a horror of me. Oh! my little Nugent, you do not know how, when I thought myself dying, your little face and childish voice, mixed with the cries of your poor little sister, kept ever and ever recurring to

me, until there awoke in me such a strong impulse to live for your sake, that it seemed as if it restored me to consciousness and life."

"You must do nothing rashly, Elizabeth. Consult Margaret, and find out the habits of the woman."

"But we must not let a day, an hour pass. I am horrified to think that he is even now with her."

"I am going out now for my drive, and will send for him to go with me. During his absence, go to her, tell her your suspicions of the laudanum; say I have gone to the town of Silborough to make inquiries of the chemist if she has bought any drug of him. Her face will prove her guilt. I need not remind you of your constitutional shyness."

"Oh! grandmamma, could I think of any feeling but that of righteous indignation?"

"I hope not; but if you show fear, the poor child will suffer."

Little Lord Nugent went off with Lady Ellerton in the carriage. She endeavoured to extract something from him regarding Andrews, but the moment the woman's name was mentioned he seemed to close his lips, with a determination that took the little colour he had out of his sickly face. Of other things he prattled pretty freely, and in his quaint fashion astonished Lady Ellerton, as he

had often done before, by the shrewdness and oddity of his remarks. Amongst other things he said,

"I suppose mamma has had enough of being sick—she won't have another baby in a hurry."

"I daresay it will be a long time."

"A month?" asked the child, quickly.

"Oh! no, a year or two, perhaps."

"Hah!" he exclaimed, with a relieved sigh, "I shall be old enough to run away then and hide myself."

"Why do so, when she loves you so much?"

He looked up with his serious, searching eyes into her face, but made no reply.

"Nugent," said Lady Ellerton, "I am convinced that you are quite sufficiently sensible to understand what I am going to tell you; and it is this: your nurse Andrews has told you that your new mamma wishes her son to be Lord Nugent, and not you. Therefore, if your new mamma has a son, you fear she will harm you."

The child coloured deeply, set his little lips firmly together, and said nothing.

"Now, Andrews is a very wicked woman. I know your mamma so well, that if she had ten sons, she would never love one more than she does

you; and I think it extremely probable that Andrews beats you, and otherwise ill-treats you, for fear you should tell of her."

The boy's eyes flushed up with a sudden bright ray of hope and happiness, his lips parted, he seemed about to speak, when a sudden recollection sent a shudder through him, and, white and silent, he shrank back in the carriage.

"Would you be pleased if I was to tell you you should never see Andrews more?"

"That you can't prevent—she says she can get at me through key-holes."

"But not if your father sent her altogether away, and forbid her being your nurse."

"But that he cannot do, for my own mamma will come out of the grave and bring Andrews back."

"I thought you were too sensible to believe such rubbish."

His poor little face brightened.

"I want to be clever—I want to show everyone I am clever—I do not want to be put out of the world."

"Your new mamma says you are so clever—you know much more than she does. You have heard her say so."

He laughed his little strange, rather elfish laugh.

"Now, tell me, does not Andrews give you strange physic?"

The very mention of the woman's name closed his lips. She sat silent for some time, her thoughts wholly occupied in thinking of the child; and as every thought made her more and more convinced some horrible cruelty had been practised, the tears involuntarily rose to her eyes, and fell unconsciously down her cheeks. The boy drew out his handkerchief, and wiped them away, saying anxiously, "Why do you cry?"

"I grieve, my poor little boy, because I think you have suffered much."

He looked at her anxiously, and then said,

"Do you think you can carry me away and hide me?"

"I will do anything you ask of me."

They had now arrived at Silborough, and giving him some money, after she had been put down at the druggist's shop, she directed the servants to take him to a bookseller's, that he might spend it there.

From the druggist she learnt that he was in the habit of providing one of the servants with syrup



of poppies, and a mild form of soothing pills, in which there was a slight narcotic.

"Could harm occur in taking an overdose?"

"No," replied the man: "I make the pills purposely large, with harmless ingredients, in order to avoid the chance of their taking more than two at the outside—whereas four or six would endanger no person's life."

"And for a child?"

"I should not give this preparation to a child, though one, or, at most, two pills would not do any harm."

"You cannot tell the name of the servant?"

"This is the last order I received, if the handwriting will assist you."

"It will only assist me if you permit me to keep it."

"By all means, madam."

Lady Ellerton fulfilled her commission sooner than Nugent did his. It seemed there was a good deal of vanity in his composition, or the want of love to a loving nature, provoked him to extort some sort of admiration. He had been asking the bookseller for works on magic, ghost-seers, mesmerism, and a catalogue of works that made the man think his little lordship one of the most wonderful children he

had ever seen. And his astonishment, almost fear, made the child laugh with intense glee. All the way home he could do nothing but talk and delight himself with the astonishment of the bookseller, and the impression he supposed he had made upon him.

"Will you give me some more money, and take me again to his shop; for when I get home I will write out the names of some still more extraordinary books, and make him stare still more. I dare say he is telling everybody now how clever Lord Nugent is?"

"I am not so sure of that. I fancy he pities you rather, because he sees you are not like other children, merry and playful."

"There is nothing like being clever."

"But are you so clever? I scarcely know any child of your age who would listen to and believe the wild tales and stupid thoughts of an ill-educated nurse, rather than a mother who has never shown you any other feeling than love."

He flushed the deepest red; every nerve seemed quivering with apprehension; he absolutely alarmed her into an apprehension that he would have a fit. She soothed and kissed him, and finding him turn deadly cold, endeavoured to warm him. As

she did so, she could not help fearing that a very serious sin would rest upon the head of her Elizabeth, if by supineness and timidity she had not exerted herself in time to save the life and reason of this poor boy. Hardly could she bring herself to excuse her for not seeing, long ere this, what was almost as palpable to Lady Ellerton as if she had witnessed the woman's cruelty.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"If I were thou who singst this song,  
Most wise for others—and most strong  
In seeing right, while doing wrong ;

"I would not waste my cares, and choose,  
As thou, to seek what thou must lose,  
Such gains as perish in the use.

"I would not work, where none can win,  
As thou, half way 'twixt grief and sin,  
But look above, and judge within."

E. B. BROWNING.

"YES, 'tis absolutely a fact ; she is not coming to town at all, and Sil, I can see, is anything but pleased."

"What did he say ?"

"That no wife of his should neglect his wishes for the sake of any children, or some words to that effect. Of course I agreed with him, and while I was giving him his breakfast, I entertained him with descriptions of the infatuated way in which one or two people that we know of behaved about

their children. If there is one thing Sil hates more than another, 'tis a motherly mother—I mean one who can think and talk of nothing but her children, bringing the nursery into everything.”

“I can imagine how he would hate it, Audrey. Many people are ignorant I have a brat.”

“Of course, that is the right way to take it, Rose.”

“What is the row about? Can't she find it in her heart to leave her child behind her, or is she glad of the excuse to bury herself and her shyness in the country?”

“Oh! 'tis nothing about her child. You know I told you how obstinate she is. When she first married, she took a dislike to Nugent's nurse, and nothing would induce her to change her bad opinion of her, until at last, taking advantage of none of us being there, she got her watched, found out something—no, I believe she watched herself—at all events, she happened to be in the nursery when Andrews took up a switch to give the boy a little proper correction for going out driving with old Lady Ellerton and forgetting to put on his gloves. You must know Andrews is here, arrived last night, and told me all this herself. Up starts my lady out of some corner, or out of the floor—An-

draws has no idea, and snatching the boy up, with a look like a fury, exclaimed, ' Woman, how dare you ? ' ”

“ Fancy looking like a fury, or being in a passion at all ! Really Andrews is to be envied at having seen what we shall never see.”

“ Do not be too sure of that. Stupid people, when they do get into a passion, not only do it better than other people, but get to like the excitement of it. You will see she will turn out a thoroughly bad-tempered woman.”

It crossed Lady Rose's mind, which was ever ready to leap at the failings of even her best friends, that Lady Audrey ought to be a pretty good judge personally of a thoroughly bad-tempered woman ; but she only said, with her sweet, mocking laugh, “ And so she dismissed her ? ”

“ Yes, and wisely and properly Andrews came to town ; but Sil had been telegraphed for by the doctor, and was obliged to start at once, without waiting to hear her story.”

“ Had he not heard from Lady Silborough ? ”

“ Oh ! yes, he had a letter three pages long by the late post, telling the whole tale, and charging Andrews with trying to poison him, or some such stuff, and that Nugent was ill—had had a fit. In

short, though I did not see the letter, you can imagine what it was ; but as he commented aloud upon some of its contents, I learnt the fact that it was probable she should not be able to come to town at all. I suppose he was all the more vexed, because he has filled her wardrobe with the loveliest dresses."

"You don't say so ! Could we not have a peep at them ?"

"I fear not. I heard him tell old Ransome to take care no one went near her ladyship's rooms."

"Can you tell me from whom he ordered them ?"

"Oh ! the usual people. They will let you see the patterns and trimmings in a minute. It would be rather fun, Rose, if you got hold of them and took the first gloss off them, because she is a very prudent creature, and will be sure to make them do for next year."

"Probably it would make him angry if I did so. He does not credit us women with too much of good-nature."

"I am afraid he knows us too well. I begged him to write and tell me all particulars, and what I should do about Andrews ; but you know him—it is ten to one if I hear from him."

"But is he not going to the Royal ball ?"

"Yes, and intended to take his wife also—at least, one of the new dresses is for this ball. I can tell you that it is trimmed with peacock's feathers."

"No—how can they be arranged to look even tolerably well? I would give anything to see it."

Lady Audrey's nature was one of those which derives a sort of pleasure from seeing another tormented, though that other might be a friend.

"Oh! 'tis most wonderfully and artistically done, but I cannot for the life of me tell you how. I am so short-sighted, you know; and had but a glimpse of it. The head-dress I had in my hands, and as no one can imitate it who has not the Silborough diamonds, I think I can safely describe it to you. It was composed of peacock's feathers, the eyes standing upright like a coronet. In some wonderful way they had contrived to put a large diamond in every eye; and there seemed to me a sprinkling of smaller diamonds on some of the points. These feathers were fixed in the Silborough coronet, so that the pearls' points on it stood up between each feather."

Lady Rose could have screamed aloud with envy and anguish, as she afterwards told her Gaby; while at the same time she hated the ill-natured, sour woman who, though her friend, yet dilated



and described and gloated over the wealth and magnificence of the minor attributes of her house.

"I shall become pious, Gaby, and keep for ever praying the boy may die, so that they cannot attend the Court ball."

"Rose!" exclaimed Gaby, for the first time in his life astonished at and ashamed of what his darling said.

"Don't annoy me, Gaby," she replied, angrily; "I have quite enough to put me out, without being obliged to be angry with you."

"Be as angry as you like, Rose—but to wish the death of a poor child!"

"You goose, couldn't you see I was only in fun?"

"Do not have any more such fun—it gives me quite a shudder."

"Just like you, beginning to be cross and ill-tempered when I most want comforting."

"My dearest, I am aware that I am not as clever as most people; but as to being a good husband, and a kind, and a tender, and a foolishly fond one, there is not another like me in London."

And being modest, as well as good-tempered, Gaby, after this irrepressible outburst of his own opinion of himself, vanished out of the room and out of the house.

Lady Rose had, what with one indulgence and another, arrived at a serious crisis in her life. The impulses of virtue were very faint within her ; whilst the constant indulgence of all the small vices had turned a lively, quick-witted, sociable girl into a woman who was at one and the same moment conceited and childish. In her anxiety to be remarkable for something, she was often ridiculous—the best of her thoughts and the richness of her imagination were both spent upon dress ; while an exaggeration of speech coloured all she said with the dross and verdigris of falsehood. and scandal. All her good impulses were in a state of torpor ; while those that religion and humanity alike forbid us to indulge in, were sprouting with the rapidity of rank vegetation. And to no one was this change in her more palpable than herself. In her wildest conceits, she felt the miserable pain of not being able to deceive herself ; and in her fits of passion and ill-temper, she could have cried over the change of what she had been and what she was. And yet she resorted to the same pleasures, the same follies, that had caused the change, to relieve her of the pain of feeling it. Never had she been assailed by so strong a fit of humiliation and depression as at the moment when her

amiable, good-hearted Gaby rushed from the room, as if ashamed of his own boasting. Truly she was right in telling him she wanted comfort, though that comfort was, as usual, his sugared drops of love, and praise of what people said of his matchless Rosie—of her beauty, her wit, her dress. It was thus Lady Rose smothered the remorse that would keep showing its ugly head. And now Gaby had left her to bear her fit of spleen alone. Really, the poor little thing was much to be pitied; and in following the bent of her thoughts, a clearer insight into her real condition will be the better obtained.

“I am sure I do not know how in the world all this is to end. I wish I had not been such a fool as to think it absolutely *en règle* to marry the first year I came out. I have had nothing of the fun of a girl’s life; and there are so many more men now whom I ought to have married rather than Gaby. They would have suited me better, as I begin to be rather of mamma’s mind—I want keeping in order. Oh! what a life is this London life!—what a wear and tear! I am always in a rage, or else dull as dull. And yet I could not, would not live without it. What could we do without some excitement of some sort. Clearly I

ought not to have married so soon; it would be something to amuse one to be looking about, and having all the excitement of still having a trousseau and a wedding before one, just as Flora Allene is doing. She came out when I did, and she is still Flora Allene, and still so admired and sought after. I asked her if she meant to be an old maid. 'By no means,' she replied. 'Then why don't you marry, you have only to choose?' 'That is very difficult, Rose. I can choose my dresses and bonnets with one look, but a husband I must know and esteem.' 'Pooh! look at me and Gaby!' 'I do,' she replied, 'and take warning.' So bitter of her; and yet there is, as Gaby very truly said, not such another husband as he is. And oh! sometimes, how I do hate him! And it is all because I married too soon. I don't suppose I ever should have been Lady Silborough. No, I don't go so far as that now, for I can see what he is—a most selfish, proud man, so hugely possessed with Silborough ideas, he can think of nothing else. I thought him at one time so superior, but since I have seen so much of him I don't care for anything regarding him, but the amusement of making so stiff and arrogant a creature flirt with me. How that ill-natured Lady Audrey would chuckle if I

was to get his high mightiness into a sort of a whiff of scandal. As I have nothing else to amuse me, I mean to go on trying, if only to see whether a flirtation with me would startle that simple Elizabeth into anything like feeling. I must be amused, and it is so ill-natured of Gaby not seeing this. What does it matter if we do get into debt? None of his people will let Gaby go to jail, and it would be some fun if he was to go, and I visit him there. I would put on my sister dress, in which Lord Silborough thought I was so bewitching. 'To die for one!' Fancy his saying that! I suppose, after all, the man has not only a heart, but is capable of feeling that there is something to be praised besides a Silborough. Dull creature! I hate people who are always thinking of their own consequence. If I had not married in such a hurry, there is the Duke of Stradarven coming home. And I don't see that I am a bit less handsome than when I came out. On the contrary, even mamma acknowledges that, when I am not what she calls 'rattling,' I am very much improved both in demeanour and etiquette. And yet, my dear good darling father will not let me chaperon Adelaide anywhere. Perhaps they want to catch the Duke for her; but I can tell them his grandmother will

choose his wife. She used to be very kind to me, and now gives me the cold shoulder, which has annoyed mamma beyond anything. Well, I cannot help it, and I don't care! If you want to get on in London you must care for nothing; and as for being squeamish about people, I do believe, if one was to be so, there would be nothing but dullness and decorum left. Still I should like to know how all this will end, because, if I am going to have periodical fits of melancholy and despair, I shall make away with myself. Last year I did pretty well with the Nutshell dinners, but Père Raby is now too wide-awake for me. And as for bothering my brains to dress in the peculiar style they are doing now, really I cannot do it. I wonder if I shall ever feel happy and good-humoured again? I wonder how those peacock-feathers were arranged? Her Countess's coronet set with feathers, and the pearl balls rising above, really it was just the sort of head-dress I should have invented, had I been a Countess; and to be wasted on her! Well, she is equally incapacitated from being Duchess of Stradarven, that's one comfort. But how is all this to end? If at twenty years of age I feel so miserable and spiritless, longing for the London season to be over, as I have had nothing

but worry and vexation, yet what have I to look forward to to amuse me ? Nothing !”

And the poor little creature’s tears burst forth. She cried bitterly for some time, and having thus experienced what she called the “luxury of tears,” she became happier ; all the more so because there was something of a consoling and soothing of her conscience in the act. For the prettiest, best dressed, merriest creature in London, to shut herself up, and begin to think, and, after thinking, to cry and bemoan herself, was, without doubt, very praiseworthy. She was going out to a grand dinner. If a man of a sympathising, friendly nature, one of her intimate friends, took her in to dinner, it would be great fun to describe to him how miserable she had felt, and how she had cried.

## CHAPTER XV.

"An accent very low  
In blandishment, but a most silver flow  
Of subtle paced council in distress,  
Right to the heart and brain, the undescried,  
Winning its way with extreme gentleness  
Through all the outworks of suspicious pride."

TENNYSON.

LADY ROSE has given her opinion of Lord Silborough, and if it was in some things correct, it did not do him justice in others. He was really a good-hearted man, and on reaching home, and seeing his poor little boy lying almost insensible in the arms of Lady Silborough, whatever he had thought on leaving London, he had now no other feeling in his heart but of anxiety and affection for both.

It was true, as Andrews had said, that Lady Silborough was in the nursery when Lord Nugent returned from his drive. She had had her inter-



view with the woman there, according to the advice of her grandmother, and having told her of their suspicions as to her giving some deleterious narcotic, Lady Silborough proceeded to say, in simple but forcible words, that she was sure Andrews had prejudiced the child against her.

"So far from doing so," answered Andrews, "it was very pleasant to me to be relieved from the responsibility of so strange a child."

"You must pardon me that I do not believe you," answered the gentle Elizabeth, with a firmness that surprised herself.

An evil, sullen look came into the woman's face. "Fortunately my character is not at the mercy of people who have not the wisdom of even a child," she answered.

"'Tis true, I am ignorant in many things, which I shall always lament, as it is the cause why my son has been so long left in your hands." Andrews looked so malignant and cruel, and appeared so likely to break out into impudence, that Lady Silborough continued quickly, "You will have his bed placed by mine; and until my lord comes, I desire you have nothing to do with him;" and then left the room.

She went to her baby, then for a walk among

the beautiful and stately trees, her heart scarce able to recognize the beauty of the scenery, or to feel the freshness of the air, so remorseful was she at the indolent, reprehensible apathy with which she had let this poor child wither and pine under her eyes.

“But I will, please God, repair my fault. Even if I have to give up some of this gaiety, which now I seem to desire and wish for—all shall be done to make him happy, while I relieve my own conscience. How easy it is to drift into sin! How glad I am to feel this stern monitor within me, that methinks will not let me rest! It seems strange how rapidly one thought brings on another! My apathy about the darling child makes me see a number of other faults in myself—some towards Audrey, her husband—my husband—my Harry. I think, perhaps, Audrey sins a little against me, but that must be no excuse to me. I have hitherto refrained from doing certain things, priding myself that I gave back no sharp retort—but what is that? Surely, if I am to be what I hope to be—worthy the place God has given me in the world—I shall remember the unprofitable servant, the wasted talent, the curse on those who did no good. If I mean to be kind, it must not

be coldly, with but half my heart. If I am to give up my own wishes, shall I mar the doing it by any thought, much less those of reluctance? Oh! no; I see—I perceive that no goodness dwells with a trembling, foolish heart, such as mine was. I know it by the wonderful power of love and sympathy that wells up in my heart for all and everything—by the gratitude that makes me yearn towards God, asking Him to make me happy by doing work for Him. How strong is the dawning of hope and energy in my heart! How exquisite that heavenly intuition which prompts the action my heart would like to do! Perhaps I may be so fortunate as to make Audrey love me, whether or no; perhaps—nay, there is no perhaps in this—Henry has loved his simple, quiet wife; but he shall do more than love her. I found an echo in my heart to the words grand-mamma was reading aloud to-day, ‘That to love mankind was to love oneself, but not after a selfish fashion; rather this love begot in one self-respect, humility, and firmness of character—whereas those who loved not their kind were essentially selfish, vain, and arrogant.’ Oh! but I will love all whom I may. And never will I neglect or resist the inward prompting, that I fear has so often knocked

at the door of my conscience, and been unheeded or dismissed. There is one now—I must return to the house, and take care my little Nugent finds a refuge in my arms, if he wants one.”

Elizabeth, after removing her things, went up to the nursery to wait for the boy. No one was in the room, and she placed herself within the recess of an oriel window, from which was spread out to her view one of those exquisite scenes of English landscape that make the heart glad to look on. The glowing sunset gave the rural verdure and freshness a richness and beauty that caused Elizabeth to wonder if heaven itself could be more fair; lifting her now so sensitive heart up to that heaven in a fervent prayer that she might live as if it was so; to be, as nearly as an erring creature might, one of God’s ministering angels. As a smile came to her lips and a glow filled her heart at this thought, she was suddenly roused by the opening of the nursery door, and the very circumstance she was in that room to prevent had already taken place, for Andrews appeared, her evil face inflamed with passion, dragging Nugent by the arm.

“So, my lord, you have been disobeying me. You know I keep my word—oh! yes, you know I never break my word. Off with your coat—off, I

say, off with everything ! Not a rag shall you have on, while I keep my word !”

The boy at first murmured a few words, such as “Nothing—I said nothing ; you know I said nothing !”

She tore his clothes off as if she was mad. A low, wailing sound came from the child’s mouth. It roused Elizabeth from the sudden shock she had felt at being convicted in her own heart of intending to do so much, yet having permitted what she most feared to happen. As Andrews drew from the upper part of the frame of a large picture a whip, Lady Silborough darted forward, and snatching the child up in her arms, exclaimed, with the passion and agony of an enraged mother,

“Woman ! how dare you ?” Then melting into a sudden flood of tears, she bent her face over the boy, exclaiming, “My darling !—oh ! my darling !”

The little white face turned to meet her kiss, a soft little smile fluttered on his face, then with a sudden loud cry he fell into violent convulsions.

Horrified and heart-broken, though she could scarcely hold him, Elizabeth sternly forbade Andrews to come near her ; and Margaret entering the room, between them the little sufferer was conveyed down into his mother’s room. Here Lady

Ellerton's experience was of infinite service, and before the arrival of the doctor the convulsions were over, though the child still seemed insensible. Angry as she was with herself, Lady Silborough felt, for the first time in her life, an abhorrence of two people—one the woman Andrews, and the other the doctor. Lady Ellerton having told him her suspicions about the giving of narcotics and other drugs, he replied,

“This accounts for much of his ill-health.”

“Could you not detect it, sir?”

“Well, no; Andrews always gave me satisfactory reasons for his little ailments, and my lord seemed so fully to trust her, I considered it best not to interfere.”

“Sir,” answered the hitherto gentle, shy Elizabeth, to her grandmother's infinite astonishment, “my lord will not forgive me if I permit you to enter this house again. Go, sir, and I hope God will be so merciful as to let you feel the iniquity of your conduct, that you may repent.”

The stern dignity of her manner, the solemnity expressed in her fair young face, made the man tremble before her. As she rang the bell for his carriage, he made some effort at apology.

“I shall forgive you, sir, I hope, before you can

forgive yourself ; and I will permit you the atonement of sending at once from Silborough another doctor."

He thanked her with real feeling.

Meantime, she desired to catch the late post, and sat by the poor child's crib, writing to her husband. By the time she had finished the letter, the other doctor came. He seemed very earnest and careful, and evidently had learnt part of the case from Doctor Ewart. He was uneasy about the continued insensibility—still more so when he was in possession of every particular.

"The brain evidently has been diseased for some time. In so young a subject, where a shock has brought on convulsions, it is hardly possible to realise the mischief done. The first dawn of sensibility may be attended with a fresh attack, which, I need not say, will add greatly to the danger of the case. He must not be left for a moment—even the movement of his eyelids must be watched, and of his fingers. His head must be constantly bathed, but the circulation of his body thoroughly kept up with warm clothing, and hot bottles, if necessary. I will return to Silborough for some medicine and other things, and, with your ladyship's permission, will telegraph to my lord to bring down Doctor

Harcourt. If he cannot do him good, no other doctor can."

All that night Elizabeth watched by her little son. On the slightest movement she was murmuring in his ear,

"My darling, oh! my darling!"

The doctor, who, on returning from Silborough, remained all night in the house, pronounced an improvement in the pulse, and a more natural movement of the limbs and muscles. But still the white eyelids remained motionless, just showing enough of the eyes beneath, to let it be seen they were glazed and unobservant.

When Lord Silborough arrived, he found his wife with dishevelled hair, her fair face flushed, her usually calm blue eyes all aglow with tenderest love, fear, and pity, her dress nothing but a tumbled white wrapper, and yet so inexpressibly lovely and attractive, that as she threw herself into his arms, unable to speak, he clasped her to his heart with a sort of strange remembrance of the words he had said to Captain Raby, on seeing the vivacious Lady Rose in a sister's dress. Why they recurred to him at such a moment he could not tell, but that they did so was evidenced from the fact that he could hardly help exclaiming,



"This—this is the creature for whom a man could die, and she is mine!"

Dr. Harcourt was almost as full of fears for the result of little Nugent's first dawn of sensibility as the country doctor. It was not until five o'clock in the evening that a twitching of the eyelids began to be visible.

"You will stand a little out of sight—you will leave him to me, will you not?" asked Elizabeth imploringly.

"We certainly think it best to do so."

Then with her tender mother's voice, with her sweet mother's kisses, the young stepmother tried to restore her little stepson to life and reason.

"My darling, oh! my darling!" they heard her murmuring with untiring constancy, "do you feel your mother's kisses? Will you kiss your mother, who gave you a little sister? Will my darling boy look up?—will he say a word, only a word, to please papa."

If the other hearers in the room, being men, and unacquainted with the character of Lady Silborough, were moved almost to tears by the exquisite pathos and tenderness of her words and actions, what was the effect on her grandmother?

God has been so bountiful as to bless us with

emotions that, out of a very ecstasy of gladness, have no other expression than tears—tears that, analysed, seemed to have risen as dew from the soul, to be absorbed by the sunshine of the heart. Never does this feeling arise more truly than in the aged pilgrim ; who, having borne the heat and burden of the day, and resting in peace, no longer racked by the throes of passion, temptation, and remorse, sees a beloved one launched forth into that whirlpool, the world, to undergo all that they have undergone—and sees them safe. How they watch the little bark ! how they feel their own pangs over again as it wavers, and is tempest-tossed—how they pray for it, and look anxiously on to see the distance into the smooth water, and all that it will have to encounter ere it reaches it ; and how rapturously, how joyously they perceive the fragile thing look up to a star in heaven, and guiding itself by it, leap over dangers, escape shoals and rocks, and, without a pause or delay, steer swiftly, unerringly into harbour.

Lady Ellerton felt that the heart of her fair and gentle Elizabeth had awakened up out of a dream of insensibility into the full enthusiasm of life. Perhaps under no other circumstances would her character have so soon, or so completely, devel-

oped itself. But her remorse quickened the innate tenderness of her heart, and together they were about to make her one of those beautiful instances of refined womanhood that cast a halo on the age in which they live. How tenderly and gently had the good God "delivered her from evil," thought Lady Ellerton—the evil of selfishness, insensibility, and hardness, those sins engendered by riches and prosperity, and which are so powerful to enslave. By no other means could one of her peculiar character, timid, and "delicately" refined, have burst the ligatures that kept her heart shut up to all but herself, while she retreated before unloved duties, the common habits, and the loud and bewildering merriment that the world called pleasure.

As Lady Ellerton's heart filled with delight at these thoughts, little hot lips tried to return the stepmother's kisses, and a weak little child's voice murmured,

"Mamma—mamma!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

“That blessed mood  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy, and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world  
 Is lightened, that serene and blessed mood  
 In which the affections gently lead us on.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE peacock dress remained unseen in the wardrobe, and the unique coronet, with its diamonds, pearls, and peacock eyes, did not shine upon London as the head-dress of the season.

“The Earl and Countess of Silborough,” said the *Court Guide*, “were prevented attending at Court by the dangerous illness of their only son, Viscount Nugent.”

In a week or two the same paper chronicled : “The Earl and Countess of Silborough have taken a house at Torquay for the season, on account of the health of Viscount Nugent.”

By-and-by it became known that Lord Silbo-

rough had bought a yacht, and having no other amusement, was trying how he might imagine himself a sailor. It does not follow that, because people are great, and rich, and powerful, they do not often wish themselves in the position of the hard-working, danger-seeking, obedient servant of Queen, country, and master. They have their times of longing for change, for any other feeling, for some other state, for freedom from the trammels of riches, for absolute seclusion. The two latter are truly blessings, of which those who possess them can scarcely understand the boon they would be to those who do not. To flee away from all the state, pomp, and publicity of rank and station—to lose themselves and their grandeur in some foreign country—to taste the comfort of being able to do and say what common people are permitted to do and say, without the fear of being held up aloft as an example or a warning—must needs be of inestimable price to the “upper ten thousand.” Let us not begrudge it to them, but the rather grant to those whom God has given the dangerous and ensnaring “talent” of riches and prosperity, the widest field for the putting it out to interest—the most charitable constructions, the most merciful judgment, the love and sympathy

of a people who, while they boast of their Queen and country, regard the ancient blood that flows in the veins of their aristocracy as the pure stream that filters through the country, refining the dregs, elevating the mass, correcting the rude bellowsings of democracy; and shining with the gentle lustre of dignity, courtesy, and refinement, cast the purifying halo of polished civilization into the remotest hamlet.

Amidst all the wild and reckless pursuit of pleasure, now so glaring a feature of London society—the rush, as among the Athenians of old, after some new thing—the insensibility that permits vice to walk amidst them unreprieved—it may be questioned, with almost a certainty as to the reply whether the higher aristocracy—the real “upper ten thousand”—have much participation in it. The increase of riches, the vast fortunes made by trade, the encroachments and impudence of those who feel they have “power” in their pockets, if they have the basest blood in their veins, have each tended to alter the state of society. People with rank, but not wealth, find themselves obliged to meet with friendly and cordial grasp those whose manners or antecedents may horrify them, but who possess wealthy sons for their daughters’ hus-

bands, or hold in their hands some rich morsel for a younger son.

It was always intended that each class in society should in a certain manner be dependent on each other for certain gifts the one lacked, and the other had enough of, and to spare. The only question was, how much was to be spared? If the one lacking drew, in his eagerness and thirst, more than the other could well afford to give without hurt to himself, it naturally followed that they changed places. And then ensued the anomaly of the upper being the lower—the servant ordering his master. Looking back into history, these *bouleversements* often occurred, and always to the detriment of the country in which they happened. Disorder, demoralisation, and general confusion became the rulers, in the place of method, arrangement, and symmetry; and in pondering upon the state of society in the present day, it is much to be feared that the bold, daring, boisterous blood of Englishmen, rendered bolder and more daring by the wealth they have gathered together, with admirable industry and wisdom, has pitted itself against the delicate refinements of the English noblemen, and, like the “tender, delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of

her foot on the ground for tenderness and delicacy," their delicacy and refinement have given way before the mad impulses of riotous enjoyment. Too much of the bold, joyous blood has been sucked in by that class from whom flow all the gentle courtesies which are as the golden frame encircling the beautiful picture, setting forth its beauty and worth. And the stream is flowing somewhat rank, turbid, and muddy, bubbling and seething, down into slums, alleys, dense streets of the working-classes of England, percolating through country lanes, and contaminating healthy, contented hamlets with the odours of feverish, moody infatuation.

Will the society of England right itself, dividing itself once more into that upper class who have a regal sense of their position, of the homage due to virtue, of the nobility of self-respect; and the second class, of brave, independent, wealthy men, who understand and love the dignity of work; with that lower class of all, who receive from the hands of both the price of the labour that sweetens all the blessings of life, giving delicious sauce to their food, an exquisite sense of the gratefulness of sleep, a simple but heartfelt enjoyment of a holiday, and the infinite good fortune of a charity that is showered down on him with a royal bounty?



It is to be hoped the natural good sense of English people will take the question to heart, and looking abroad, right and left, behind and before, see that on each class's assisting the other depends the welfare of the country that is so dear to them. No encroaching the one on the other—let each keep its place. The upper to refine and make beautiful that which is valuable; the second to give out from their ranks those whose conception of nobility extends to the man of God, to the patriot, the hero, the philosopher, accrediting them with rank of soul, of mind, of brains; and both, as before, causing the lower class to look up, as children, to their father, and, in looking, to revere, to love, to obey the superiority that they admit, while they admire.

“Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, why will ye not be gathered together under one fold and one Shepherd?”

If his wife, through the influence of a tender heart, had broken through the fetters that seemed to enchain her shy nature, as a prisoner, Lord Silborough had the disadvantage of being still in the possession of an insensible heart. Insensible after this fashion, that he had not that quiet warmth which anticipates a sensa-

tion. He was kind, amiable, good-natured to the world, but anything like sensation or affection was only felt for himself and those who belonged to himself. He had been, and still was, much grieved about his son, added to which was a certain annoyance that Viscount Nugent, his heir, should have been nearly killed, and, at all events, was seriously injured by the disgraceful behaviour of a servant, a common sort of creature, whose boast it ought to have been that she might put on the shoes of this great Viscount Nugent! Lord Silborough lost sight of his son's danger in the anger occasioned by the indignities offered to him. He had sent to his sister an immediate order for the dismissal of the woman from Silborough House, and a threat that should his son die, no fear of any annoyance to himself would deter Lord Silborough from having her taken up on the charge of murder. In his first passion, he wrote in such strong terms, that it almost seemed to Lady Audrey and the woman that he would be glad if he lost his son, rather than forego his revenge. Therefore, in fear and terror, Andrews accepted the help of Mr. Buckhurst, to quit the country altogether; he being moved to assist her in this way by the hope of ingratiating himself with his brother-in-law.

Whether Lord Silborough appreciated his efforts or not, the news that Andrews had sailed for America, and was recommended to try her fortune among the Mormons, arrived at an opportune crisis of her poor little victim's illness. As he lay in his step-mother's arms, out of which he cared not to be removed when awake, his father sitting by, noticed the terror that came into his eyes every time the door opened.

"Why are you frightened, Nugent?" he asked.

"Papa," said the little fellow, feebly struggling in his weakness with those feelings of pride and vanity that had made him so strange a child, "I am always expecting Andrews."

"Then, my boy, expect her no more, she has sailed to America."

The boy raised himself up, and repeating, "Six thousand and more miles over the sea—it takes eight or ten days to get there—she might come back."

"Let her," answered his father, angrily. "I will put her in jail if she does."

"Put her in jail out there, papa!" said the boy, with a shudder.

"My darling," whispered his mother, "she will not, cannot come back. I am your nurse—your mother!"

And his little feeble arm was round her neck in a moment, his eyes gazing into hers with such love, hope, and happiness, she felt that nothing should ever sever her from her husband's child. But it was in a matter like this that Lord Silborough's heart failed to answer. Loving his wife perhaps more than he had ever done before, involuntarily according her that admiration her sweet lovingness demanded, he yet did not see that, to perfect the cure of his son, to satisfy her tender remorse, he must give them both up to each other for a time. He was not without affection for his boy, but, at present an affection for himself was stronger. Elizabeth, in his opinion, had never looked more lovely. Her beauty was more refined and delicate than ever, from her recent seclusion. Added to which, was the beautiful charm of expression that illumined her face, as light illumines the diamond. He was proud of her, and longed to let her blaze like a meteor in the waning of the London season. He knew the habit of the multitude, their idolatry of some new thing, their enthusiastic rushing after sensation. And what a sensation she would cause, especially with the halo of her sweet lovingness to her stepson, whose life and reason she had saved. He could not understand the feeling that made her

reject with horror the idea of leaving the boy, whose reason still demanded the utmost vigilance and care.

"I had provided so many fine things for you, Elizabeth."

"Did you, Henry? Oh! how kind of you—how like you! All the more must I devote myself to our darling, to show my gratitude."

"Where did you learn to call me Henry, Elizabeth?"

"I have always called you so," she answered, blushing.

"I never heard you."

"I did so from the first, in my mind. I spoke of you to myself by that name. Do you dislike it?"

"Dislike it, love! No, I can hardly tell you the curious sensation it gave me to hear the name of my childhood; it was only when I went to school that I lost it."

"I could not call you what the world called you, but you did not ask me to call you by any other name."

"Are you so romantic, Elizabeth? I should have thought you the last person to think such things. You are, or were, so much too shy."

"Oh!" said Elizabeth, smiling and blushing,

"we shy people are, if anything, too sensitive. I hope you will forgive me, but sometimes, to myself, I call you Harry."

"Do you, darling?" he replied, bewitched into a state of ecstasy by the sweet attraction of her look and manner. "I have a mind to punish you by desiring you call me by no other name."

"I will call you Harry on great and momentous occasions, since you like it."

"My name is Harry too," interrupted Nugent, with a sudden jealousy.

"I don't know you by any other name than 'darling'!" whispered the loving step-mother.

"Do you call him 'darling'?" inquired Nugent, pointing irreverently to his father.

"No, Nugent," answered his father, good-humouredly, "she has never done so yet. But I shall be much obliged to you to make her say it to me sometimes."

"I may sometimes," said the little lord, patronizingly; "sometimes when I am not by to hear."

"What a funny little jealous fellow it is!" said his father, carelessly amused.

It was clear that all the attractions that London might offer would not beguile Lady Silborough from home. When it was suggested that new

scenes and other air were alone wanted to complete Lord Nugent's cure, Lord Silborough thought with a little dismay of the autumn passed, as he considered it, acting as one of the nurses. It was Elizabeth who suggested the amusement of a yacht, and it may be questioned if Lord Silborough ever enjoyed more quiet happiness in his life than sailing about the coast in his yacht, accompanied by his beautiful, blooming wife, his convalescent boy, and all the luxuries that brains could invent or money buy. Yet was there one thing wanting—just the least sensibility, on his part, of the cause of his happiness. He merely thought it was a very jolly time.

## CHAPTER XVII.

" 'The busy world,' she said, all mockingly ;  
 ' The idle world—most idle in its toil—  
 And toiling in its happiest idleness !  
 The foolish world ;—the ignorant suicide  
 That kills itself with care, and knows it not ' "

T. WADE.

**M**EANTIME the Rabys were visiting the Buckhursts at Silborough ; and it is needless to say, with nothing but country neighbours, some races, and a county ball, Lady Rose found herself far from merry.

Lady Audrey in London was only just bearable, but at Silborough she was insufferable. She so far recognized the power of the London crowd as not to try to make herself conspicuous in it—but here at home, a Silborough born, in the Silborough country, she was wholly unable to keep her balance. And she was lording it and ladying it, in consequence of the absense of the proper lord and



lady, in a manner truly ridiculous. At one moment she was displaying all the glories of her birthplace—at the next mysteriously withholding them, as not fitted for common eyes. She was magnificent and voluminous in her promises—contemptible and little in her performances. Mr. Buckhurst did his best to keep her pride in some sort of order, and her ill-temper and captiousness under control; but the happiness of being able to lord it and lady it was too much for her.

“Gaby, I shall die if you keep me here any longer—take me away!”

“Take you away, darling? What has happened? That ill-natured creature has insulted you?”

“Not at all—I should like to see her do it; but she bores me. I am dull, Gaby—I am dying of dulness.”

“My poor darling! but what are we to do? We settled to stay a month here; and you know, as usual, my pockets are completely empty.”

“I wish I had not quarrelled with mamma, or we might go to Alwyn. It was so injudicious of her, trying to advise me.”

“Darling, she did it for the best; and your father was anxious, as you know, Rose.”

"Gaby, don't incense me!"

"Not for the world, dear; only I feel sure, if you would like to go to Alwyn, they will welcome you warmly."

"Oh! yes, just as if I was a good child, and was very sorry for my fault! No. Gaby, if there is one thing on which I pride myself more than another, it is holding my own. Mamma completely forgot herself, and when she would have apologised, she only made matters worse by saying she wished to caution me, for Adelaide's sake. As if I was not as dear to her as Adelaide!"

"It was that particular party, Rose. After all, darling, it was a very bad party. I am sorry we went. They were too fast even for me."

"For you—you, Gaby! Of course they were, you innocent thing; but that is just what I like—to mix in it all, have all the fun, and keep out of the mess."

"But do we keep out of the mess? My father was awfully angry at my going; and was most furious that I took you."

"Took me! I beg your pardon, Gaby. I am never taken by anyone. I took you."

"But I was not going to tell my father that, Rosie."

This his Rosie graciously allowed was no more than right of him; and, basking in the sunshine of unusual praise, Gaby rashly proposed going to Raby Hall.

"Goodness gracious!—do I hear aright? Go to Raby! You want to kill me, Gaby, to get rid of your poor little Rosie."

"Upon my soul, Rose, I don't," replied Gaby, nettled. "I have not been to visit my mother for eight months; and she is always writing to me about the child, wanting so much to see it."

"For goodness sake, let her have it, and keep it! I wouldn't deprive her of that pleasure for the world. And, if you have a dutiful fit on you, why, go also. I am sure, if I was anywhere but here, I should not miss you."

"Oh! Rose, you are unkind; and, indeed, I cannot but think you might remember how good my people are—so generous——"

"They are too good for me. I shall not forget in a hurry the fortnight we spent there just after we were married. Your father always talking politics or crops."

"My father wants me to get into Parliament."

"Oh! Gaby, you a legislator, with not two ideas in your head at one time, unless I put them there."

And why on earth need we bother ourselves about the country?"

"Somebody must, Rose; and my mother declares she would rather have her children true patriots than anything else."

"Or a goody like herself, going about with soup and flannel, telling me who is sick in that cottage, and how many children in the other, and of wonderful old creatures two hundred years old——"

"Rose, Rose!"

"And your sister Matilda teaching the dirty brats, and Louisa always bothering about science and ologies. Not a single reasonable idea amongst them of anything going on in the world."

"Pardon me, Rose," said the good Gaby, now considerably nettled, "it would be very well for us if we were half as good, or half as clever."

"Dear, dutiful boy, it shall go to its mother, it shall, and help with the soup and the flannel, and teach the little brats, that is, if it knows its own A B C, and learn an ology or two."

Gaby was wise enough to take refuge in flight. And as is the case with very good-natured people, once they are seriously disturbed in mind, 'tis very difficult for them to right themselves.

He smoked incessantly for two hours, and found himself rather worse than better. He took a walk of ten miles, and returned hot in every way. He locked himself up in his own room and sulked. Finally, he took out a picture of his mother, that he kept in his dressing-case, intending to swear to it he would see her righted,—poor fellow, so he expressed and so he felt it, doubtless, not being capable of perceiving that a frivolous little mind like his wife's could not wrong her. As he looked at the picture, and her sweet, loving eyes seemed to penetrate into his heart, their influence cooled and calmed him.

“You are the best mother that ever lived,” said he aloud to the picture, “and I don't care who knows it—nobody shall contradict it to me—or I'll know the reason why. And I'll go and see you, mother. I feel I want to see you, and get a good motherly kiss from you. I am got too much of a worldly fellow, and I don't seem to like myself worldly. I would rather be as you made me, before I mar—before I went into the army, though my brother officers are very good fellows, and I like them all—I feel as if they were my brothers. But, mother, don't you fear but that I will just take a good step back to my old ways, and be your

own boy again. I was not made to be worldly, and I don't like it !"

Thus did the good Gaby talk to his mother, and by degrees he talked himself into good humour again. He put his mother, as he called the picture, back into her resting-place, solemnly vowing to her he would go and see her before many days were over, whatever happened, and get a good motherly kiss from her. Then he dressed, and with the usual serene and truthful look in his eyes, descended to his daily duty of eating his dinner and making himself agreeable to his neighbour.

Lady Rose, meanwhile, had consoled herself with a book she had better have left alone. However, she considered she did herself no harm in reading what she called exciting books.

"Nothing is likely to harm me," confided she to Lady Audrey.

"Oh ! nothing, dear," answered Lady Audrey, looking at her, with the look with which it is supposed the spider may have looked at the fly.

"I hate a goody book, don't you ?"

"It depends if the language is good," replied Lady Audrey, who was, by way of being a little blue, a little serious, and much of a critic.

"And what is the use of history ?"

"Ah! well, 'tis interesting to read of our ancestors. People who have blood like the Silbroughs, ought to know their family history."

"Certainly, if they did anything worth writing about," retorted Lady Rose; "my great-grandfather was ennobled for being a hero."

"Of course, dear, heroes ought to be rewarded, as we were on the plains of Normandy. Robert of Normandy said——"

"Thank you, Audrey, you have told me the story before; but we were speaking of books, I think. I have a mind to write a book myself."

"Have you, dear—a novel, perhaps?"

"Oh! dear no, novels are so common. I shall write about bores, and being bored!"

Lady Audrey was touchy. She had also no control over her temper. So the two ladies had a quarrel; but before the dressing-bell rang they patched it up into a hollow peace. Each felt the other might be of use to her, and it was imprudent to quarrel about nothing. So they descended to the dining-room, where was a country party assembled, outwardly most loving, arm in arm. Lady Audrey, usually ill-natured about giving Lady Rose somebody nice to take her in to dinner, forewent this little pleasure, and sent her in with the

best man there; but to soothe her conscience for this piece of good-nature, Gaby was given, as his companion, the fat wife of the Vicar.

But Gaby's mind was in that serene state, he looked upon all motherly people with kindly eyes, and was so beaming and good-natured—the fat lady exerted herself with such effect to entertain him—that not a pair at the dinner-table were so merry.

Lady Rose soon found that her best man was so extremely handsome, he could think of nothing but himself; and after trying to extort a compliment out of him in vain, she left him to the contemplation of his own face in a spoon—a contemplation that seldom gives a pleasant feeling to plainer mortals. “But he was so beset with vanity,” said Lady Rose, “he preferred looking at himself distorted, than looking at me, though I was exquisitely dressed, and worth it.”

So she became cross again, and after dinner, as great people will sometimes do among little people, she turned her back upon the company, put up her feet, and proceeded to read the book she had better have left alone—so wilful was this little creature! How was she to be “delivered from evil”—the evil she courted and delighted in?



So the company went away, glad to dine at the Castle, to have a first-rate dinner, and see some of the great ones of the earth. But they entered their own lesser homes very well satisfied with themselves, thinking so much luxury now and then a good thing, but doubtless extremely bad for the digestion every day ; admiring all the beautiful plate and china, but delighted not to have the worry of caring for it all ; pleased with the dress and jewels of the great ones of the earth, but charmed to find their own manners were quite as good, if not better. And they were very right to be so contented and self-satisfied. But Lady Rose went to bed in a worse humour than the humour of the day, and poor Gaby perceived, by certain infallible signs, that she would rise still more petulant. And he hoped on this day she would be in the sort of humour that he could tell her he had made a vow to go and see his mother, and get a good motherly kiss from her.

Gaby began to feel he was glad he had only vowed this vow to a picture. He rose, and went to his dressing-room ; he felt ashamed of looking at his dressing-case. Luckily everything he wanted for his toilet was spread out for his use on the table. Had he been obliged to go down to

breakfast with his hair uncombed, because his comb was in the dressing-case, he would have done it rather than open it.

Such were Gaby's feelings, when suddenly in the inner room he heard a shriek. He could not for the life of him tell what sort of shriek it was—pain, pleasure, or anger. His Rosie was apt to shriek upon any occasion. He thought it best to wait until he heard another, as he might perhaps understand its tone better. But a series of little shrieks, all coming nearer and nearer, made him stand stock still in the middle of his dressing-room, his tie in his hand, just going to be adjusted. Lady Rose rushed into the room, into his arms, embraced him frantically, shrieked again, and in a few minutes made him understand that something had occurred of so charming and agreeable a nature, she was in the seventh heaven of happiness. She thrust a letter into his hand.

"There, you dear, stupid old thing, read that!—just what I should most like—just what I was dying for. I must rush up to London, and get proper dresses. How Audrey will stare, and what fun!—she will be so vexed, cross creature! I am so glad; she was so ill-natured yesterday, and think of the letter being in her own hand-writing!

My dear Gaby, I am wild with delight ; but Sirryll, Sirryll, instantly begin to pack up—we must be off at once.”

She rushed back to her room, and left Gaby to read the letter :—

“DEAR LADY ROSE,—My lord begs I will ask you and Captain Raby to come and take a little cruise with him in his yacht, the ‘Sylph.’ He thinks of going round Ireland, and he remembers hearing you say you should like a cruise of that sort. He starts on the 14th. I am prevented going by the still delicate state of our little boy ; but he bids me tell you he has engaged one or two other people to form a nice party.

“Pray believe me sincerely yours,

“ELIZABETH SILBOROUGH.”

“Stiff, old-maidish letter, isn’t it, Gaby, but everything to me,” said Lady Rose, as she kept flying in and out of the room.

“I’ll tell you what, Rosie,” said Gaby, with his hand on his dressing-case ; “he doesn’t start until the 14th, so while you are in London, getting your things, I will run down and see my mother.”

“Do, dear, and get her blessing, lest you should be drowned.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ The bridegroom sea  
 Is toying with the shore, his wedded bride,  
 And in the fulness of his marriage joy  
 He decorates her tawny brow with shells,  
 Retires a pace, to see how fair she looks,  
 Then, proud, runs up to kiss her.”

A. SMITH.

**R**ADIANT with happiness, conscious that nothing was ever seen so becoming or so new as her yachting-dress (not even the sister's), with a box full of the prettiest nautical hats, Lady Rose found herself at Torquay, on the 12th of September, the guest of Lord and Lady Silborough. Her good Gaby, equally radiant and happy, joined her there, his filial heart thoroughly satisfied with motherly kisses, and his paternal feelings immensely gratified by leaving his pretty little boy at Raby Hall as his substitute. Altogether they were both of them prepared for any amount of enjoyment—Lady Rose's centering on herself, and the good Gaby's through her.

Nevertheless, Lady Rose experienced a shock, and it was unconsciously inflicted by the gentle Lady Silborough. As she welcomed her guest into her house, Lady Rose, keenly alive to such things, was greatly struck with the vast improvement in Lady Silborough's manner and expression. Though never awkward, or otherwise than graceful, there had been in the shy, reserved girl a certain girlishness and simplicity that made her seem only just out of the school-room.

In the beautiful, refined creature who welcomed her with such warmth, yet with so much grace, Lady Rose saw a being whom she could never hope to rival. The daintiness of the yachting-dress, the coquetry of the nautical hats, the remembrance of any and every of the most becoming dresses she had ever worn, were all useless, as Lady Rose felt, to enter into the lists against Lady Silborough, in a white muslin dress, with a blue ribbon in her hair. From whence arose this superiority?

Lady Rose took her to pieces in her mind. She compared her with herself, feature by feature, air, complexion, and figure. Knowing it was useless to lie to herself, she strove to be honest in her judgment, and perhaps was so. As regarded out-

ward perfection, she was right in thinking there was not much to choose between them, excepting that there was a delicacy in the complexion of Lady Silborough wanting in Lady Rose. But the latter attributed this, and not without reason, to her having borne the wear and tear of the London season ; whereas Lady Silborough had been living an Arcadian life among roses and lilies, with not a care to speak of. For Lady Rose's mind was incapable of understanding the remorse from which the gentle Elizabeth was only just recovering.

"Gaby, did you ever see a woman so improved as Lady Silborough?"

"Rosie, I stare and look at her with the greatest amazement. All London will be raving about her next year if she only looks half as well then as she does now."

"Don't be a goose, Gaby ; it is only two years ago since you told me I was infinitely her superior. They say all girls improve after marriage. According to that, I ought to have improved too."

Lady Rose was too well acquainted with her own face not to know she was the reverse of being improved. Still, it was Gaby's duty, and her expectation, that he should vehemently assure her she was.

Gaby hesitated. With Lady Silborough's pure and beautiful face rising before his mental vision, how could he say the little pettish, hardened countenance of his darling Rosie could be compared with it? "I tell you what it is, Rose," said he, willing and eager to compromise, "it is not her features or complexion, it is her expression that improves her so much. She is so much more animated and lively, and altogether at ease with one."

"I believe, Gaby, for once in your life you are right. I remember telling mamma, if Lady Elizabeth only knew how beautiful she looked when she smiled, she would be always doing it. Yes, that's just it—she has found out the improvement it is to her, and so she is beginning always to do it."

"Not always, Rose—she has her old grave face at times. But did you see her when that sick boy came in?—Lord! how delighted my mother would have been. When he laid his head on her shoulder, and looked up with those wonderful eyes, and she looked down on him, I felt, Rosie—I felt, if I had been Lord Silborough, I must have clasped both in my arms and given them a good hugging."

"Don't be vulgar, Gaby—luckily Lord Silborough has more sense."

"He may have more sense, but I don't envy him

any of it, if he did not feel as I felt. And when she gave the little baby into the boy's arms, Lord, how I did wish I was a painter!"

"Do hold your foolish tongue. Do you know I have had a letter from mamma?"

"I am very glad of it, Rosie. I thought you would. I went to Alwyn for a day, just to tell them the news."

"How dare you do so, without my leave!"

"I knew your father would be delighted to hear we were with the Silboroughs themselves—they have no opinion of the Buckhursts."

"Then, if it is any satisfaction to you, they are pleased; but do you know we were in imminent danger of having the Buckhursts with us in the yacht?"

"Nonsense! How came we out of that mess?"

"Lord Silborough kindly thought I should not like to be the only lady, and so, knowing we were such friends (think of his mistake, Gaby!), he invited them to come with us. However, Lady Audrey is of much too bilious a habit (being all bile, I should say) to venture on the sea. So she refused. I told Lord Sil I would much rather have no one, if I could not have Lady Silborough; which he took as a compliment, confiding to me



how delightful! With heaps of money one can do anything. It shall be my own fault if anyone is more admired or more sought after than Lady Rose Raby!"

With such happy anticipations for the future, and such vast enjoyment for the present, Lady Rose Raby set forth on her voyage. Besides her attentive and excellent Gaby, with her kind and courteous host, Lord Silborough, there were two other what she was pleased to term "proper men," whose names, according to the fashion of the times, were "Doodleums" and "Baby." Doodleums was the gentlest, most amiable of men. Handsome, quiet, meditative, he was always ready to do anything, and especially to talk books. Baby was, of course, six feet six, or thereabouts, and, if possible, more quiet, meditative, and reflective than Doodleums. In fact, they were a delightful pair for a yacht voyage. Always ready for small, nice talk, always at hand to take a turn at anything, and perfect gentlemen from their hair to their heels. Perhaps Baby was a little too big for a yacht.

"When you walk about on deck," laughed Lady Rose, "I am afraid it will split; you will go through, and the yacht be swamped."

"I will swim with it on my arm," murmured

Baby through his leonine moustache, "until we get to port." And really he looked as if he could do it.

And now the good Gaby led a most enjoyable life. His Rosie was one of those dear creatures who preferred having the services of any man to those of her husband; and as Baby and Doodleums had not much to do, it gave them infinite pleasure to amuse her. Moreover, Lord Silborough, when not in important consultation with his Captain, always sought her lively and amusing society. So Gaby delivered himself over to a lazy and indolent life, such as he had not experienced since his marriage. He only exerted himself to eat and drink, the sea giving him, as he said, an extraordinary appetite. And it is not to be denied that sometimes the sea air had such an effect upon him, this innocent lover of his mother's kisses had some difficulty in getting into his berth. The sea was pretty calm, and the yacht very steady; but Gaby's sea legs after dinner excited the liveliest concern in the minds of his friends, insomuch that Baby more than once took him up by the collar of his coat, and deposited him gently and tenderly in his berth. Thus Gaby laid himself open to a serious charge; and Lady Rose, with tears in her

lovely eyes, apologized to Lord Silborough, assuring him that her poor Gaby had so weak a head; she wondered at nothing.

Doodleums and Baby took a magnificent view of the matter, ignoring it altogether. Lady Rose also gave them tears and apologies. They imputed the tears to a feeling of sea-sickness, which they understood was a disease almost beyond man's bearing, much less woman's. And they accepted her apologies as a joke, at which they were to laugh. When Baby laughed he always did it on deck, lest he should blow up the cabin.

To one so capable of judging her fellow-mortals, it was not unnatural for Lady Rose to be much struck with the fine brotherly feeling that characterised her fellow-voyagers.

"Now, if we had been four women instead of men, how we should have quarrelled!" thought she. But that did not so much surprise the little flirting thing, who had a very bad opinion of her own sex, as did their behaviour to herself. She liked to think she had a certain power over men; and, boxed up with four, and no other lady to rival her, of course she could do what she liked with them, and, if the truth must be told, that liking was to torment them a little.

Now, though they were most obedient and untiringly devoted, she saw she owed this to their chivalry to the sex, and not to her charms as a woman. Moreover, any little joke or fun, or that sort of familiar intercourse which living in a yacht engenders, was entered into by them *con amore*, if Gaby was present. But when poor Gaby's sea-legs failed, it was quite curious to see the sort of gentle deference and ceremony with which they treated her. No laughing or joking. If Gaby was conscious instead of unconscious, he would have found his little fast Rose yawning in the company of these sedate, serious men. In vain she tried a good many arts—in vain she was quiet, lively, tender, cross, nervous, and bold, all in turns; nothing altered their apparently fixed determination to regard Gaby's little flirting Rose as Gaby's most darling wife.

Now, though Lady Rose could not help admiring this in them, yet somehow it annoyed her. She had such a passion for power and influence. She wanted to see Baby at her feet, supplicating but the leaf of a rose from her hand, that she might have the delight of withering the monstrous giant by merely a look. And she had an ardent longing to make Doodleums forget his thorough-

bred demeanour, treating her as a little queen, irresistibly impelled to tremble before her, as a lovely woman. Whether they either of them had the least inclination to please her in these two fancies is one of those things that never will be known. It is sufficient that, during the five weeks they were cruising about, they never showed the slightest sign of doing either.

As for Lord Silborough, it is not to be denied he was fond of the society of pretty women. Without caring much about it, he knew that Lady Rose had once cared for him. This gave him a sort of interest in her, such as one has when one hears that some one has spoken well of one behind one's back. Moreover, he considered that he was a little answerable for the melancholy fact that Lady Rose had thrown herself away on a fool.

Poor Gaby ! he was one of those creatures who are either abhorred or much petted by men.

Lord Silborough abhorred him as a fool who cared for nothing but eating and drinking, and who, if he did speak, generally said the last thing he ought to have done. While Baby and Doodleums regarded all his little ways with tender indulgence, Lord Silborough had no patience with him, and it thus happened that he took an increased interest in

Lady Rose, because he pitied her. Thus, men in his position not having that control over themselves that lesser creatures are obliged to cultivate, it somehow oozed out of him that he did so. Always ready to swallow anything regarding herself, Lady Rose deeply felt his kindness, in interesting himself in her forlorn fate, and confided to him the fear that had so lately oppressed her—namely, that she had married too soon.

“I was so inexperienced, Lord Silborough, scarce knowing my own mind—that is, I did a little ; but, then, what I did feel was impossible. So I thought it best to obey mamma, and get out of the way of my sisters as soon as I could. Though Adelaide is not married yet, or likely to be.”

“It is doubtless a sad mistake to marry too soon. I began to feel that in my first marriage, though of course, dear Lady Rose, I rely upon your confidence never to divulge this. In fact, I only mention it, just to show why I was so careful in selecting my second wife.”

“She certainly seems admirably suited to your poor, dear little boy.”

“So very tender-hearted,” answered Lord Silborough, not knowing whether to be angry with Lady Rose or his wife at this speech.

"And I did not think she had any heart at all, when I first knew her. When it was hinted that she had made a conquest of you, she was ready to cry with horror."

"I think you must be mistaken—it must have been some other person," he replied coldly.

"Perhaps so," answered Lady Rose, seeing she had gone too far; "I only thought it was you, because I—that is—there were so many girls ready to jump at what she appeared to despise."

"Despise is too strong a word, Lady Rose. In fact, you mistake Lady Silborough's character altogether. The fault I find with it is, that she is too humble. She does not give herself credit for what she is, and that is, one of the most feminine, refined persons I ever saw. She is the true type of the real gentlewoman."

Lady Rose, by nature, was indifferent to any praise that was not accorded to herself, and had a sort of repugnance to it, if it was spoken of another woman—so she changed the conversation by saying, "How I pity people who are ignorant of the luxury and beauty of a night at sea! You do not know, Lord Silborough, what life and health this little trip has given me. Only one drawback—only one!"

And she glanced at her Gaby, peacefully snoring the sleep of the placid, the moonbeams playing sad havoc with the beauty of his features.

Lord Silborough looked at him without taking any pains to conceal his disgust. And yet, after all, apart from this one little propensity that Gaby had now, for the first time in his life, indulged in, moved to do so by having no wiser mode of showing his happiness, was Lord Silborough, in the sight of God, a better man?

It is true, Gaby had not gone through so much of the ordeal of riches, pomp, or state—he had not been bowed down to from infancy—and all self-knowledge stifled from the fact that none was required; he was presumed perfect. But Lord Silborough was not much wiser than poor Gaby; for, with a certain knowledge of the world, he had yet taken no pains to consider his own place in it—apart from the accident of rank and station. He was not prepared with any strength or reason to resist a drifting to good or bad, as they might happen to be presented to him. The enthusiasm or warmth of goodness, of the divine feeling of gratitude, of the charms of nature, of the unspeakable wealth of love, had never been felt by him, in the manner they usually present themselves to men, because he



had never struggled, fought, conquered, won them, by the force of his own will. Everything seemed to be there in the palm of his hand. So he was but an ordinary man, who, at present, having tasted every blessing of life, was just arriving at the conclusion of poor Gaby, that the greatest event of the day was eating one's dinner.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"Every morrow, we are wreathing  
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
Made for our searching; yes, spite of all,  
Some shape of Beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits."

KEATS.

AND yet Lord Silborough was continually thinking, with a real thrill of pleasure, of the circumstance that, after having kissed his wife and his children, bidding them all farewell with infinite good feeling on his part, his beautiful Elizabeth, just plucking at his sleeve, drew him a moment aside, and laying her soft cheek to his, whispered, "Think of me often, Harry."

His heart was beginning to stir a little out of Silborough pomp and grandeur, and it was absolutely this sensation, excited by his wife's parting

words, that made him take the trouble to be troubled at Lady Rose's sad fate in having married a fool. He did think of his wife very often, recalling with pleasure the soft pathos with which she pronounced the word "Harry." He had a sort of feeling that it was sweeter than any music, and that he longed to hear it again. Yet, acknowledging this, he was uncertain whether he was not more angry that his wishes could not be fulfilled, than pleased that he had felt the gratification.

In this uncertain state of mind, he was ready to be biassed either way; and, of course, in their present intimate situation, it did not take Lady Rose very long to find this out.

Meantime, Lady Silborough, if she felt for the moment a youthful longing to be one of the party of pleasure, soon forgot it in the delight of witnessing Nugent's daily improvement both in health and mind. Having her whom he now fondly called his "Mumsey" to himself, appeared to have the happiest effect upon his odd little brain, and the pleasure he took in everything regarding his baby sister, with whose birth he appeared to associate some great and important good to himself, was unceasing and untiring.

"He never now," wrote Elizabeth to her grand-

mother, "alludes to odd books, or the wish to be clever. He is becoming, what he ought always to have been, a complete child, and this, I am assured, is a very favourable sign. He does not willingly permit me out of his sight, though all fear of Andrews seems completely banished from his mind. I am astonished, dear grandmamma, at not feeling dull, with only a child and a baby for my companions. I longed to be able to go this pleasure trip in the yacht. It seemed to me to be so happy a thing to see new places, and take in new ideas, accompanied by one's husband. For I find myself, dear grandmamma, looking to his company—his kind love—for all my pleasures; they are not complete without him. Either I am so happy to be fulfilling your wishes, exerting myself to deserve his love, and reaping my own reward in so doing, or our little darlings prove the bond by which I know his happiness is so interlinked with mine, they can never again be separated. This gives me some idea of the real meaning of 'bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh,' and the indissoluble nature of the bond of matrimony. Oh! grandmamma, what a fearful thing to enter into this compact lightly, without due regard to the awful consequences of a mistake!—taking a vow

to incorporate your nature into that of another, before testing if it is one you can esteem and love. It makes one shudder to think that there must be, in the heedless marriages made now-a-days, a couple who go about chained to so adverse a nature, it might seem to them as one dead manacled to one living! But why do I give you my crude ideas upon what you know so much better than myself? I will return to the subject of the children. I find them most companionable. Even the little baby grows so interesting—every day some opening intelligence, that both Nugent and I hail as a new pleasure. I think I see in her an antitype of myself; every day some new idea opens my mind, and I have lost all regret as to going in the yacht. I am so in love with this quiet, still life, and with the thoughts that throng so quickly to my mind. I am Nugent's governess, and feel more and more grateful to you and Miss Cheverill for the kind care you bestowed on my education. And it is most pleasant to me to recall it all, exercising my memory as to how much I have lost. I think my little daughter shall have no other instructor than her mother for the first few years of her education. It seems to me so important that the first lessons should be

given with love, unspeakable patience, and the gentlest but most resolute firmness. Are you not of my mind? Can a governess have the love and patience of a mother? What love it is! Dear grandmamma, I gaze on my children until absolutely tears of inexpressible rapture fill my heart, I feel so blest—so crowned with honour that I have such gifts as a charge. I watch with extreme interest a hen with a brood of chickens, that is kept in a yard over which my bed-room window looks. Her vigilance, her joyful cries, her untiring watchfulness for her numerous brood, excite my warmest sympathy. I think to myself, I will not be outdone by you, O fond feathered mother, and what is more, I will not cast off my brood, as you must do, when nature points out they can shift for themselves, and you, O hen, are already thinking of another hatch. It seems to me, dear grandmamma, that my little chickens will require my help, my love, my vigilance just as they are launching out into the world, flown from the parent nest, more than ever. Tell me if I am right. Now I will conclude this long letter by the description of a little scene just enacted between me and my children, to prove to you how amply I am repaid for resisting the inclination to go in the yacht. Baby is in her cot, and Nugent

lous how a person of her disposition gradually infects her companions with her own thoughts and frivolities. Now, a woman's endeavour should be to use her influence to exalt the imagination and minds of the other sex; and in doing so she ennobles her own. There are many ways of doing this, but I fear not one that I can hope Lady Rose will use. I know her father has been painfully anxious about her career, and has seen with extreme displeasure her intimacy with certain fashionable persons in the London world, whose elevation to such notoriety is one of the misfortunes and disgraces of the age. He is a man for whom I have the highest esteem, and I may mention to you in confidence, he is one of those whom you describe as being so ungenially married as to seem to have a dead body, or nature, tied to his living one. If Lady Rose ends, as her present mode of going on leads one to fear she will, Lord Alwyn will have the inexpressible anguish of feeling that the mother he gave her is the cause. Can you not conceive how such a thought must weigh upon the mind of an affectionate father and a high-minded man? I am, I fear, wrong to anticipate evil. I ought rather to remember that Merciful Power who may in good time 'deliver her from evil.' Will my Elizabeth

think her grandmother captious and rather hard to please if she gives her still another warning? There is scarcely a man in the world who can bear to find a rival in his children, of their mother's affection and care. I have known many instances of vain regret—one, my dear friend, the Duchess of Stradarven, who lived to deplore an over-indulgence in the sweet and delicious pleasure of devoting oneself to one's children. In my days, and hers, of childhood, we had a vivid remembrance of the utter absence of anything like affection between us and our parents. We did obeisance to them as slaves to monarchs; we were not allowed to sit in their presence, or to express a single wish or longing of our childish hearts. In fact, we dared not speak unless spoken to. She was higher-spirited than myself, and of so proud and haughty a nature, she did not, as I did, outpour her affections on humble companions, or pets, or fancy work, or reading again and again the few books she could call her own. She brooded over and chafed at the loneliness of her position, debarred intercourse with her parents, and too proud to put up with any lower. Thus, on her marriage, she rushed into the opposite extreme, and became one of the first of those mothers whom you now meet



everywhere, and who think no other duty in the world belongs to them but that of mother. The Duke struggled for some time against her infatuation, for such it was. Her children always slept in her room ; she rose up in the early morning to attend to them herself ; she was their governess, and, in being so, unfortunately the tenderness of the mother was lost and forgotten in the duties of the teacher. Thus they grew up without that affection her care and love deserved—the sacredness of the name of mother was lost in those of task-master and chastiser. There was no love to which to appeal on occasions when mercy and love would have softened the little wayward hearts. She deprived herself of her highest motherly prerogative, namely, the power to bind her children's hearts to her by the inexpressible privilege of mercy and love. You once noticed to me a sort of sad tristfulness in her eyes, and wondered at the feelings that caused the look in one so honoured, so beloved, so courted as she is. It is, I fear, Elizabeth, the remembrance that if ever there was a bad man, it was her husband ; and yet his character was originally infirm, not wicked. She might have made him anything. And, of all her children, there is not one left alive, nor was there one who, when

living, was a comfort or honour to her! This is an extreme case—it can rarely happen again; but it does not lessen her remorse. As far as we can judge, she has repaired all her mistakes in regard to her grandson, who is now coming home from a long sojourn abroad, and of whom I hear, even from herself, that she hopes, with God's blessing, he will restore the name of Stradarven to the state it was in when she took it. To have wasted so much of life, of energy, of the holiness of duty, for such sad results, has ever seemed to me one of the hardest punishments God can inflict upon an erring mortal—the motive so pure and good, the execution so resolute and unselfish. And yet perhaps not unselfish, for she omitted all other duty for this one. And there was also, methinks, somewhat of impiety in her efforts—she would be God to her children as well as mother. If this was her sin, she has amply atoned for it. Few know the form and manner of her repentance; but all those unceasing and untiring energies that she devoted to her children, are now spent in the duties she so long forgot. There is not a social duty belonging to her rank that she is not ready to perform. There is not a charity in London that is not as much benefited by her wisdom and

her care as by her gifts. Oh! my dear Elizabeth, shall I confide to you her and my wish? It is that you may take her place in London society. Conspicuous in the highest ranks, you will, as she does, purify it by the power of goodness and the lustre of virtue; mixing in all its pleasures, its duties, its charities, you will be regarded by all thinking men as the model from which they will choose their wives. And prove to women what a gigantic power they hold in their hands if they have the good taste and sense to imitate your example. May your present quiet time, my darling, be employed in making yourself fit for this noble duty, prays your loving GRANDMOTHER."

## CHAPTER XX.

"Envy detects the spots in the clear orb of night,  
And Love, the little stars on the gloomiest night."

R. C. FRENCH.

LADY SILBOROUGH'S heart was as yet too timid and apprehensive to be warmed up into that state of high resolve and nobility of soul that would qualify her to fulfil her grandmother's hopes. The very greatness of the idea made her shrink from the position. And it was not unnatural. There is a certain sort of repose in great characters—they seem almost in ignorance themselves of what they can do, until the moment has come for them to act. To prepare for the various virtues of fortitude, forbearance, and self-abnegation, robs them at once of their halo.

At present the gentle Elizabeth felt that perhaps some forty years hence, when she had been proved, when the faults she felt she must commit, as her birthright, had been repaired and forsaken, when her work and inclination no longer

pulled different ways, that she might then, from the calm height of quiet, resting old age, feel ready to be a guide—a beacon.

That there was some truth in her grandmother's caution, not to suffer a passion of zeal to hurry her into any extravagance of action, smote the heart of Elizabeth as a warning she must not neglect. Already she had surprised herself by the fervour and eagerness she was ready to throw into any duty; and when that duty was united to love, the sweet pure love of a mother, she understood at once how quickly and overwhelmingly it would possess her.

As she passed day after day with no other society than her children's, she was not without many a wish that if only her "Harry" could think as she did, they need never stir out into the mad, bustling, changing, selfish world, in search of pleasure. She had a strong fit of this feeling when she returned home to Silborough Castle, as it was settled she should do, in time to receive the yacht-party there. For she was given a dose of the world's selfishness and deceit, on the very threshold, by Lady Audrey. Elizabeth had written home to say she was coming, and, to avoid any shock to Nugent, had directed that the room next her own, generally used by her as a sitting-room, should be prepared as his nursery.

"It might, my dear Audrey, have a bad effect on him if he lived again in the rooms where he endured so much misery."

On arriving at Silborough, she found no notice had been taken of this request, for the rooms were unaltered. But conceiving there must be some mistake, she desired it to be remedied at once, and leaving Nugent in his sister's nursery, went to ask Lady Audrey the reason. That lady had not told her husband of these orders, and as he was present, and she knew he would be extremely angry with her, no resource was left her but to say,

"Oh! I never had the letter."

"That is provoking," returned Elizabeth, calmly, and believing her. "I gave the order in the same letter I asked you to send the carriage to meet us."

The astute husband perceived at once what the simple Elizabeth had not questioned. And to show his wife she should not trifle with him, said at once,

"Say you forgot it, Audrey; because, of course, if the same letter carried the one order, it brought the other. But be at ease, Elizabeth, I will go at once and see your wishes carried out."

"I suppose I shall have no peace now you have come home," said Lady Audrey, sullenly, after her husband had left the room.

"Why do you think so?—and why did you not think with me of what was best for Nugent?"

"Because I never can agree with you. It seems to me as if you thought exactly contrary to what everybody else does. It was much more proper that Nugent should become accustomed to whatever you suppose was disagreeable."

"There is no need that he should; besides, for some time, everything like a shock or annoyance must be avoided."

"You will see, when Sil comes home, he will be extremely annoyed. He had that room purposely fitted up for you."

"I had forgotten that. I will go and arrange some other plan."

But the company of Lady Audrey and her husband by no means helped Lady Silborough to regret the innocent company of her children the less, though he was assiduous in repairing all his wife's ill-nature. And they passed a very uncomfortable week together, when it was ended by the arrival of the yachting party.

Only Lady Rose and her husband returned with Lord Silborough, when she and Lady Audrey again rushed into all the delights, whisperings, and conferences common to bosom friends.

"My dear Audrey, I have enjoyed myself immensely, but I do wish you had been of the party. Baby and Doodleums are most excellent creatures, but so proper—really I had scarcely a bit of fun with them the whole time. In fact, I do not know what I should have done but for Lord Sil; though he, poor dear, got a little dull at last. He absolutely was home-sick, or wife-sick. Fancy what he confided to me one evening—when he was rather spoonily inclined—that the prim Elizabeth, when they are alone, calls him 'Harry'—think of that, my dear creature!—that is, that she is beginning to call him Harry. Don't you long to hear her? like this—Ha-r-ry. A little frightened at being so fond."

"Rose, how you make me laugh! Really it is quite pleasant to have something lively in the house. We have been most awkward in our tempers, my dear."

"You don't say so! What a bore for you! You will have to turn out, won't you?"

"No, indeed; I have not devoted myself to Sil all these years, giving up all the comforts and conveniences of a home of one's own, to be driven out before I know where to go!"

Lady Rose was essentially saucy in disposition,



and had the greatest difficulty in refraining from letting some fall on Lady Audrey.

"There is one thing to be said, Audrey—if you cannot agree it is wisest to part. There is no comfort in always snapping and snarling. Just like mamma and me at last; and, oh, dear! it drove me to marry in the hurry I did!"

"I am sure you never could have got a husband who suited you better. He is the most devoted creature I ever saw, and never seems to see another woman but you."

"That may be; but oh! Audrey, he has been so naughty—I was so ashamed of him. It might be the sea-air—but only think, he was constantly quite tipsy. He couldn't sometimes articulate. Just think what a situation to put me into, if either of the men had been rude!"

"Oh! you had Sil."

"Well, he was most kind—really quite a brother to me, pitying me so much; for he thinks, and I think myself, I have thrown myself away."

"You seem to have become quite confidential!"

"Yes, we were indeed; and if I get no other good out of my yacht voyage, I feel I have made a friend for life of Lord Sil."

"Do you intend to go on with your confidences here, before his wife?"

"Why not? He is not ashamed of them—neither am I. I'll bet you anything, if you like, he is now telling his Elizabeth, as he calls her, of Gaby's bad behaviour, and how much I am to be pitied; and how I am, perhaps, a little too larky, but that I have a secret sorrow at home, and go out into the world, and laugh and talk to hide it—which is praiseworthy of me. And furthermore, he will ask his Elizabeth, which is as good as commanding her, to be kind to this poor little Rose, and to take her by the hand and befriend her, in case anybody says unkind things of her. And she will look pleased and important, saying, 'Yes, Ha-r-ry.'"

"Rose, Rose, what a rattle you are!"

Meantime, Lady Rose was perfectly right in her conjectures as to Lord Silborough's confiding to his wife that he thought Lady Rose much to be pitied. He described, with much disgust and anger, Gaby's sins; and if it crossed Elizabeth's opening mind that Gaby's sins were something like the Duke of Stradarven's, caused by the conduct of his wife, Lady Rose's devotion to gaiety being as ardent as the Duchess's to her children, still she was none the less sincere in promising her

husband to assist and befriend her in any way she could. They had arrived so late in the year from their yachting tour, that almost everybody was already engaged to the different country houses. Therefore the Silboroughs found it difficult to make up a Christmas party.

Lady Rose, a little tired of having to keep her temper with Lady Audrey, a little sick at heart at the display of Lord Silborough's fast increasing love for his wife, and not a little envious and sad at the growing perfections of the charming Elizabeth, decided that to stay longer at Silborough without company was more than she could endure.

"We will be dutiful, Gaby, and go to both Alwyn and Raby. I want to get papa to help me to refurnish the drawing-room of the Nutshell. And we must coax your father into giving us another carriage. Coming from the Silboroughs, we shall be in fine odour with both. And I am determined on one thing, Gaby, that though folks may admire Lady Silborough, and though the world will be running after the Duke of Stradarven, people shall still acknowledge there never was anything, and there never will be anything like Lady Rose Raby, and the delights of her Nutshell. We are paupers, but we are royal ones."

Lady Rose was not the only one who made plans for the ensuing season. There being no one else in the house, and Lord Silborough spending much of his time with his wife and children, he now and then heard Lady Audrey speak to Elizabeth in a manner that both astonished and disgusted him. He questioned his wife upon the subject, from whom, of course, he learnt nothing.

Assuring himself, from quiet observation, that he was not mistaken in the extraordinary behaviour of his sister, he spoke to her husband about it. Mr. Buckhurst thought it the wisest plan to make a confidant of his brother-in-law.

"I can assure you, Sil, it has been making me perfectly miserable. After all your kindness and liberality to us, that Audrey should be so utterly lost to the sense of what is due to your wife, has been so painful to me, that I have had to threaten her with the idea I shall apply for foreign service."

"But in the first place," interrupted Lord Silborough, waxing into passion, "I should like to know on what grounds, and how she dare presume to treat Lady Silborough in the manner she does?"

"Indeed, my dear Sil, I can only account for it in this manner—she is jealous. For so long she has been, as she fancies, everything to you—"

"Everything to me! She has been nothing. I did not want her—I never cared much for her. She was an ill-tempered girl in the nursery; and I fancy, Buckhurst, you don't find her very good-tempered now."

"Of that I shall say nothing; but she has the idea that you are, or were, very fond of her—and I know she is very fond of you."

"A curious way of shewing it, to insult my wife! And a creature so gentle and loveable as Elizabeth! I asked her—I asked her point-blank one day, when I first suspected Audrey's conduct; and though she would not tell a lie about it, she had such a seducing pretty way of turning the conversation, I could not urge her more. But, of course, Buckhurst, you will understand I do not mean to be unkind to you, or unjust to Audrey, but out she must go. I will place a thousand pounds at Drummonds' to help you to buy a house, as I suppose you will think it best to make your home in London; and I will make it another thousand if you will settle there within the month. Meantime, just give Audrey a hint, if I find that by so much as a look she insults Lady Silborough, out she goes that very instant."

"And you will serve her quite right," said the

politic brother-in-law; "Audrey's conduct quite shocks me, for I can assure you, Sil, if ever a man had an angel for a wife, you have."

"I know that, without being told!" growled his brother-in-law, who of course had his fits of ill-temper and bursts of bad manners, just like any other common mortal.

That night Mr. Buckhurst by no means spared his wife in describing this scene.

"I shall go to London to-morrow; and you will be good enough to let me know which part of London you prefer. It will make no particular difference to me which you select, for, as I said before, I mean to apply for foreign diplomatic service."

"Oh, Buckhurst!" sobbed his wife, who was really very fond of him.

"It is too late, Audrey, to repent. It is not once, but times upon times, that I have warned you of the consequences of your ill-temper—because it is ill-temper; you cannot really hate so sweet a creature."

"I do—I do! I can't help it. I hate her in every way!"

"Then if you must indulge your hatred, you must give up something to do so—and that is your

husband. I have told you often, I am not a man to live in a small house, in the humdrum way we must live, if our children are to inherit anything after us. And I really love them too well to live easy in my mind and spend their little portion. At the same time, I must belong to a large establishment, and have all the luxuries of it; the best wine, first-rate cooking, and all those things which have become absolutely necessary to me, if I am to live at all. I have no objection to blow my brains out, if that will suit you better; but I think my wisest plan will be to offer myself as private secretary to the new ambassador for R—. I have been in that country before, and made friends there; and I feel sure he will be delighted to have me. So say at once what part of London you would like, and I will execute the two things at once—namely, get you a home, and provide myself with one also.”

Lady Audrey sobbed all night, but to no effect; her husband departed by the first train, saying he would write about houses, since she would not say what part of London she liked best. She wrung her hands half the day, and was perfectly wretched and miserable, thinking herself the most unfortunate of women, yet not in the least imputing it to her

own fault. She even entertained the idea of sending for her brother, and expostulating with him, and entreating him to consider that through his unkindness she was going to lose her darling Buckhurst. But some glimmering of common sense or fear prevented her. The account of her brother's anger, not to say fury, as described by her husband, remained like a nightmare on her mind; while she bewailed over the impossibility of anything that she could have said or done, causing it. In fact, she had a mind something like the ostrich, who, hiding his head in the sand, thinks he is hidden altogether. She, threatened with the dreadful grief of losing the company of her husband, utterly lost sight of the circumstance that she owed her sorrow to herself alone.

As she brooded, and mourned, and wept, and bewailed herself, she followed Lady Rose's example, and mapped out for herself a line of conduct for the ensuing season, which, if it did not bring her any pleasure—for she could know no pleasure without her darling Buckhurst—still might bring her a little soothing consolation by way of revenge. She was not clever, it was not a characteristic of the Silboroughs, and her weak little schemes of reprisal would have made most people laugh. But it was



the only comfort she had to make them, and in endeavouring to perfect them, her mind became too absorbed to care for much else.

Her husband returned, and told her that he had bought the remainder of the lease of a house in Green Street—extremely comfortable and full of conveniences—he had set the painters and paperers to work; and she heard without a remonstrance. He desired her wishes as to furniture, and she said, with perfect truth, her mind was too much occupied to think of such things, she left all to him. And when he wound up by saying he was appointed private secretary to His Excellency Lord So-and-So, Ambassador to the Court of Somewhere, and was to be ready to depart in six weeks from that date, she only gave a deep sigh, and recapitulated all her little plans for the summer in her mind.

Meantime, Lord Silborough was so much pleased with his brother-in-law's expedition, that he forgave his wife, and they had, upon the whole, rather a friendly parting. Lady Audrey gave her sister-in-law the side of her bonnet to kiss, and then thanked Heaven she was not a hypocrite. She did not like her, and never had liked her, and she never meant to like her. Indeed, now it was a

positive duty to hate her. Was it not owing to her that her darling Buckhurst was going to leave her ?

Lord Silborough had his wife and children all to himself for a few weeks, before the opening of the London season, and he surfeited himself with love and luxury. He was just getting to that period of a man's existence when, having no other particular excitement, he takes to gastronomy.

He began to lose his figure, and felt he was growing fat. Still it was such a delicious calm life, his Elizabeth so lovely and loving, his boy growing to be, under her loving care, just what his boy ought to be, and his little daughter already promising to be the image of her mother. He was contented; indolent, and insensible to anything but his own thorough enjoyment. And in this luxurious, silky, pampered state he was ready to launch himself forth on all the delightful excitements of London. It is in such a state of mind that the great enemy of manhood loves to find his victims.

As for the sweet Elizabeth, she also was in the happiest mood, after her fashion. She was still so girlish as to enjoy a romp with her step-son, and looked the loveliest girl in the world as she did so. She was on most lover-like terms with her husband ; not shy, yet still a little chary and reticent of ca-

resses and murmured "Harrys." These were reserved for peculiar and marked occasions. And as for the London season, she smiled to herself with happiness at the thought of it, and had some curiosity to examine the wardrobes so bountifully filled by her husband. And above everything, she was blushinglly curious to know how she should look in the peacock dress, with its coronet of pearls, diamonds, and peacock eyes.

## CHAPTER XXL

“Those that are up themselves keep others low,  
Those that are low themselves hold others hard,  
Nor suffer them to rise, or greater grow ;  
And every one doth strive his fellow down to throw.”

THOMSON.

AND so the roar of London began again. To the *habitués* of this region of every bliss and every woe, the sound was like the trumpet that announces victory. They had conquered the dulness of the country, and came trooping in victorious masses, to be rewarded with trophies and spoils. The commoner and rarer visitant of London was stunned by the noise, bewildered by the crowd, and almost bereft of his own identity ; but still he struggled on his way, thinking it the right thing to do, and pleasing himself by the hope that at all events he was in the fashion.

As for the Nutshell where the paupers lived, it was the most perfect asylum for such paupers ever

beheld. Lady Rose's drawing-room, newly furnished and decorated, occupied the attention of the world for one whole day, which was about as much notoriety as she could expect for it. And she was quite satisfied, because by it she succeeded in entrapping the great lion of the season, the young Duke of Stradarven, into her Nutshell; and having once got him there, he seemed a willing prisoner.

Her tactics had been admirable. She started ahead of everybody in the race for notoriety, by merely the success of these two things. The young Duke was remarkably handsome, so much so that Lady Rose said "he was wickedly so." Also, he was extremely good, which made her add, "he was angelic." These qualities (of an opposite kind, according to Lady Rose) had, together with the oddity of one of his baptismal names, Benedetto, caused his friends and companions to endow him with the *nom de caresse* of Bene. Bene was in and out of the Nutshell almost as often as Gaby himself.

"We are going to do the country bumpkin, and scream at a farce to-night, having no other amusement in view. Will you be of the party, Duke?" asked Lady Rose of the wicked, angelic Bene.

"I dine out with grandmamma."

Bene had a royal sort of way, when speaking of his grandmamma, of affecting "the boy."

"No! what a good child! I hope you will do all grandmamma tells you."

"I go only to oblige her. I do not know the people by sight, though one was my brother-in-law!"

"Gracious goodness!—the Silboroughs. You will have to take the automaton into dinner."

"Meaning Lady Silborough."

"Of course, the excellent Elizabeth, the new model stepmother. Now, I will be good, and just coach you through the sort of conversation you must keep up with her, to make her say a word. First, be sure you ask her if she has ever heard the name of 'Harry.'"

"Rose, Rose," interrupted her husband, "remember, how kind she is."

"Gaby is a little in love with the automaton, you must know, Duke; it is the greatest fun watching them do their small talk. They ask each other little questions, to which they innocently reply 'yes' and 'no!'"

"Am I to do the same?"

"Oh! no, ask her if she has entered a sisterhood. I saw her carriage the other day with one

in it, and I see she has become patroness of some Dorcas society. You cannot go wrong if you try these subjects."

"But I know nothing of them myself. After she has said her 'yes' and 'no,' what am I to do next?"

"Ah! there is the weather, or her children—ah! 'yes, start her upon the subject of her children, and she will save you all further trouble."

"But I shall be bored."

"So you will. What fun! Now, pray—pray, Duke, promise me one thing—you will come here to-morrow and tell me all about it."

The "blessed 'one," as he was sometimes called, owing to his perfections, his many advantages, and his Italian name, promised faithfully, and departed. His "grandmamma" was very proud of him, and liked being escorted by him; and though he was a little low—as to being bored at dinner, he also was proud of her, and liked being her escort.

And they duly arrived at Silborough House. The face of the automaton pleased him much. Its girlish innocence of expression and purity of complexion was just his taste.

"If I am bored," thought he, "I can look at her. I begin to think Lady Rose considers her a rival."

The Duchess having asked to see her great-grandson, Nugent was sent for. He came at once, and passing in and out through all the guests, made his way to Elizabeth, when, with a joyful cry of "My own mumsey!" he sprang on her lap and kissed her. She, seemingly nothing loth, suffered all her maternal feelings to mantle in her face, and returned the kiss with equal warmth, regardless of any ruffling to her dress. Then, bidding him go to the Duchess, she watched with sparkling eyes and sweet smiles her pleasure at his improvement.

Nugent was still rather quaint in his ways, and was much given to a sort of old-fashioned politeness, which led him to make his great-grand-mother a profound bow, and then kiss her hand. Charmed with his action and countenance, she drew him towards her, and kissed his cheek, saying—

"My darling, I should scarcely have known you!"

"It is all my mumsey's doings—and doesn't she look pretty?—much prettier than anyone else."

"And who may you be, sir?" asked the young Duke.

Nugent looked at him steadfastly, and then said,

"I know very well who you are—the women



call you the Duke, and we men Bene. I am your nephew, Nugent."

"You are too much of a man, I suppose, to call me uncle?"

"Oh! yes—I should think so. I have caught a trout a pound weight. Call me Nugent, and I will call you Bene, and we will say we are cousins."

"Agreed. Do you ride?"

"Of course; I am going to be mumsey's squire in the Row."

"You will let me ride with her sometimes?"

"Yes, if you have a decent-looking horse."

Bene fulfilled his promise to Lady Rose the next day, and sauntered into the Nutshell about three o'clock.

"Well?" she exclaimed, all excitement.

"Well?" he replied.

"What do you think of her?"

"I think—nothing."

"I thought so—I knew it—what fun!"

"Because I am past thinking—I am in love with her."

"Nonsense!—what did she do to achieve such a feat? Was she quiet and silent, and spared you being bored?"

"By no means; she laughed and talked, and

kept me in such a state of amusement, I forgot to eat my dinner. I was so hungry when I got home, I had to have supper."

"Do tell me the whole thing from beginning to end!" cried Lady Rose, with an attempt at vivacity.

"We had a scene that I rather liked before dinner—grandmamma desiring to see my little kinsman, Nugent. You know, his mother was my sister—she was a good deal older than I. The boy is evidently very fond of his new mother, and she of him, for they greeted each other in a manner that—that I shall like my wife to greet her son, if I have a wife, and she a son."

"How pretty and interesting!"

"Then, as we went in to dinner, she said, 'I think it so nice to hear all you young men calling each other pet names. At first it used to bewilder me, but with Nugent's help I know which is Baby, and Nigger, and Doodleums, and now I hear that you are Bene.' 'Yes,' I replied—'that is my name. I was thought such a blessed child, coming after several sisters, that I was given the name of Benedetto. But I understood the young men of the present day were looked down upon as very muffish for this habit.' 'Of course,' answered she, 'you will never find everybody of the same

mind about anything. But I like it. You are all so brotherly and fond of each other, and I am sure you all feel so.' 'You are quite right,' said I; 'we would do anything for each other. They tell me you are rather fond of sisterhoods. Are you a sister of anything?' 'No, I am not,' said she; 'and, do you know, I don't seem to care to be a sister of one thing. I feel as if I should like to be sister of everything.' 'Then,' I answered, 'if you are, I shall certainly be a brother.' 'Agreed,' said she; 'so when the help of a brother is wanted, I shall just let you know, as you will do the same by me when you think a sister is required.' And so, as I told you, Lady Rose, what with marvelling at either her beauty, or her expression, or her grace, or all three, and trying not to lose a word she said, I forgot to eat my dinner. But I quarrelled with my dear grandmamma coming home."

"No—how could you be so undutiful?"

"I asked her why she had not reserved Lady Silborough for me. My brother-in-law is a stupid booby, thinking only of eating and drinking. 'He is becoming very stout,' says grandmamma; 'but I think he is dotingly fond of her; and I wanted just such a mother for poor little Nugent.' 'Grandsons ought to be cared for before great-

grandsons. However, I will make it up with you, grandmamma, if you will find me a wife like her. And until you do I shall be in love with her, which is, as you know, a very wicked thing.’”

“Did grandmamma allow this?”

“Not at all—on the contrary, she said, ‘By all means love her, until I find one like her. I may not perhaps succeed as far as beauty goes, for she is a most beautiful creature.’ So I said, provided she was not positively forbidding, I should like a wife whose heart coloured her face with fresh roses, and out of whose eyes shone a serene soul.”

“Very modest indeed!—I think I may venture to offer my help.”

Poor Lady Rose! It was very hard to hear London ringing with a description of Lady Silborough’s appearance in her peacock dress, and to know that she was pronounced by the man whose fiat was at present “the fiat,” as the only thing worth looking at in London. Triumphant but a week ago, the pauper of the Nutshell was ruling London with her little jovial nod, and now she was collapsed—she was nothing. She was pauperized to the utmost extent of paupery. She had known, had felt, that Lady Silborough, bursting on the world, as Pygmalion’s statue might have done on

him, when warmed up into life, would take all hearts by storm. And yet they were accustomed to her beauty—it was an exquisite charm of manner, that even Lady Rose could not resist. It was this bursting into life and animation. Her low, sweet laughter was pronounced the most exquisite thing ever heard; her smile what a goddess might envy; her grace unequalled.

Lady Rose had the mortification of never being able to escape from some sign of Lady Silborough's popularity. The town had paid her the compliment of indulging in Raby fashions; but the manner in which London was placarded with the Silborough robe, the Silborough bonnet, mantle, shawl, gloves, colours, new inventions, carriages, race-horses, sugar-plums, work-boxes, gentlemen's neck-ties, fans, hats, charities!—in short, everything that desired to be known and noticed had the Silborough name added to it. And that the gentle Elizabeth should not only have all this vast popularity and ovation, but enjoy also the exclusive attentions of the other great attraction of London, the Duke of Stradarven, was, as Lady Rose expressed, more than a block of stone could stand unmoved. Consequently the poor little thing became reckless.

A few little naughty scandals that she tried to spread about of the loves of "Bene for Elizabeth," fell flat to the ground. The public at present adored them too much to hear the slightest word against them. They were their idols, set on high; and it is a noticeable fact that when the idols of London go in for being good and excellent, London credits them with every conceivable virtue known in Heaven or elsewhere. While it is not less true, if they take to worshipping an idol with peccadilloes, there is not a peccadillo big or little that they do not believe their idol to have committed, worshipping it all the same.

These are things scarcely to be understood, except by little worldly creatures such as Lady Rose. She determined, did this little reckless thing, to bring the town down on its knees for having paid homage to what was fair without, but most simple within. She would make London angry with itself for being taken in.

Of course Lady Audrey, now settled in Green Street, lamenting her Buckhurst when she was not thinking of her revenge, was heart and soul ready to assist in so laudable a work.

"I have made those two, whom you know, leave their cards at Silborough House, as if I was

there still. She will (not knowing that Sil, though he knows them, never permits them inside the house) of course return the visit. After that, she must ask them to the house, and of course she and Sil will quarrel."

"Pooh! Audrey, that is nothing; besides, she won't quarrel with Lord Sil. The best thing is for them to go boldly up and claim her acquaintance at some ball. I will tell them what to do. Just let us compromise her a little, and she will collapse and disappear like a bubble. The town is labouring under the idea she is going to improve us all. Only just let them see she is as weak as any one of us, and we shall see what we desire to see."

## CHAPTER XXII.

“Lift up thy trusting eyes unto the sky,  
 For Heaven, not earth, shall give thy words a hearing.  
 Speak Truth undauntedly, and live and die  
 Life loving, death unfearing.”

E. H. MITCHEL.

THE morning after the secession of Bene from the Nutshell, victim to “Simplicity,” as said Lady Rose, his grandmother came and paid Lady Silborough a long visit.

“In the first place, my dear, I have come to thank you, on the part of his dead mother, for your love and care of her son. I am aware of all you did—the sacrifice you made to insure his recovery; but I need say no more, as the beautiful sight we all witnessed last night was ample proof how well you have been rewarded.”

“He is so affectionate and loving. Besides, remember how weakly, wickedly I left him so long in the hands of Andrews.”



"Why should you be more to blame than ourselves?"

"Because, madam, I felt so often an inward sort of prompting in my heart, always urging me to inquire into that which my common sense told me was wrong. And I drove from me any thought of interfering. And if he had died, or, still more horrible, never recovered his reason!"

"How you shudder, my poor child! I am happy that, with so sensitive a nature, you have been spared this corroding grief."

"Is it not strange, awakening up out of shyness and reserve such as mine was, that I feel now so much the other way? I seem to desire to do everything for everybody. I enjoy this gay, fascinating life, I like making new acquaintances, and conjecturing their real characters. I find the least thing interests me, and my heart can hardly take in the number of things that present themselves to my mind."

"This is often the case with enthusiastic characters, and I believe there never was anything said more true, than that there is no real virtue without enthusiasm. The exposition of this is set forth in a book I have recently read, and it proves, in my opinion, unerringly, that the whole beauty and

strength of the Christian character arises from its enthusiasm."

"That is an idea that pleases me much. I grieve to feel so eager, to be so anxious, so ardent, and then find it is all for nothing—a whim. But to throw one's whole being into the practice and love of virtue, to be a true Christian, methinks that is an enthusiasm I should love."

"And one you will possess, my child, as the pains and passions of human nature call forth the exercise of those feelings over which we are to triumph, if we hope to conquer. Of what use would be our enthusiasm, if we had nothing to do to call it forth?"

"I cannot look forward to such times without a shudder lest I should fail at the hour I ought to triumph."

"No one knows his own strength until he is tried, but it is impossible for you to hope that you will escape them. It is as well to cultivate the highest, most elevated feeling, as a safe-guard."

"And yet it seems to me as if I was fenced about with innumerable safe-guards, in the shape of blessings that very few have."

"So I thought, Elizabeth. But I know you have heard my story from your grandmother.

indignant love and horrified purity tends to drive them further away; while the exquisite sorrow of Divine pity melting into mercy, turns their hearts into gall and ashes. 'Tis a hard, hard fate for a good woman to be pitted against a reckless, abandoned one. She has not any weapons to use such as her adversary can wield with boldness and impudence. 'Tis an insensible age this, and yet they think this insensibility is goodness."

"Pardom me, dear Madam, if I remark how pleasant it is to see the young men of the present day so happy and brotherly. They seem so honest and true to each other."

"Yes, more so than the women of the present day; but, Elizabeth, after thanking you for your care of Nugent, I came here partly to give you some idea of the people who are now crowding to claim acquaintance with the beautiful Lady Silborough. Of course there are some among them who are bold enough to leave their cards; but I feel sure Silborough will by no means permit you to become acquainted with them. Why I think it right to mention this is, that last year, when Lady Audrey was mistress here, I was grieved to find she had got into the set which we will designate as too fast. Poor Lady Rose Raby is much too in-

imate with them; but with her we have nothing to do."

"Do not say she is to be one of those I must not visit, because in some things I like her, and Henry wishes me to be kind to her."

"Does he? She went yachting with him."

"Yes, and it was during that time he discovered that she was very much to be pitied. Captain Raby has one bad habit."

"Into which she has forced him. I understand it all. You must, of course, be civil to those whom your husband likes, and if your influence or example is of use to Lady Rose, you will delight the whole Raby family—most excellent people—and gain the everlasting gratitude of Lord Alywn."

"I fear she has no exalted opinion of my common sense; but I am ready to give and take with her in that matter."

"Do so, my dear Elizabeth. She is a worldly little thing, and must see that it will always be to her advantage to have you for her friend. I have hope for her in that way."

"And I have hope for her in a stronger point of view, which I can only explain by saying I feel a certain friendship for her, which I cannot think will be broken."

"Nothing is so beautiful as faith. Of course, under any circumstances, I never meant to exclude Lady Rose. She has, as yet, done nothing notorious. But why Lady Audrey, a poor, discontented, pining sort of good woman, should have gone into the circles of the fast ones, and taken two of the most notorious into her bosom as dear friends, I cannot make out. They of course would be delighted to have the *entrée* here; and Lady Audrey having so foolishly opened the gates to let them in, it not unnaturally follows they will leave their cards on you. If they do, show them to your husband, and ask what he wishes you to do. I feel certain of his reply. But Lady Audrey's conduct astonishes me all the more, because she was somewhat laughed at and somewhat scorned, even by our set, for holding herself so very high. I see you will tell me nothing of her behaviour to you. But, Elizabeth, I am too much of a woman of the world not to know she has done this from some motive—which is, to place you in an awkward position."

"She does not love me, I acknowledge; but I hear she was always of a querulous temper. Henry says she never agreed with him, and now, we see, her husband has left her."

"She may be querulous, but she is something besides. At all events, I owe you too much not to be very watchful for you. Knowing that natures like yours will see no evil until it is thrust nakedly before you, I have made out a list of those who I imagine will be your visitors. All those marked with a cross I love and value. Those marked in this fashion I like, but do not know so well. The rest of them I have left to your own judgment. These black lines speak for themselves; have nothing to do with them, and as little as politeness warrants with these. And now, my love, excuse this long and prosy visit. London society wants natural, earnest characters like yours; to purify it, and to do so, you must be nearly as full of worldly wisdom as themselves."

"I fear so, indeed—poor simplicity is sadly laughed at!"

"And yet in simple characters we find great ones. 'Tis a glorious position to be in, that of yours. Youth, wealth, rank, beauty, you will not wonder, my dear Elizabeth, that we, your grandmother and I, look to you for great things."

"I pray, my dear madam, that you may not be disappointed."

"I pray so too. I do not wish to go about



as I am doing now, warning and strengthening. Your victories will be made by sudden noble deeds; you will recover the lost by magnanimity. Do not fear for work. There is always opportunity, alas ! for exercising every virtue under the sun. Do not let idle, foolish gossip torment you about Bene. You both carry your characters in your faces. You like each other, and when two fine characters meet, they cannot but admire each other. I wish you had had a sister, Elizabeth ; but I will pay you the compliment of saying, my dear, we ought not to expect the blessings of two Elizabeths at one time. Farewell, my dear, don't forget my worldly maxims, be as wise as the wise ones. Ah ! here is Nugent, cap and whip in hand."

"How do you do, grandmamma. Will you permit me to have the company of my mumsey in the Row ? Our horses are at the door."

"Willingly, my little lord ; perhaps you will be kind enough to see me to my carriage?"

"You do me honour—pray accept my arm?"

And my Lord Nugent, on his tiptoes, handed out, in the most gallant manner, his great-grand-mamma.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"My brain, methinks, is like an hour-glass,  
Wherein m' imaginations run like sands,  
Filling up Time ; but then are turned and turned  
So that I know not what to put upon."

JONSON.

THE suspected cards were left, and left, as might  
have been expected, fruitlessly.

"Don't fret, Audrey," said Lady Rose ; "we  
will have the saintly Elizabeth on speaking terms  
with the fast ones yet. Are you going to H—  
House to-night?"

"I am invited, but I have not spirits to go."

"Go, by all means, my dear, and you will find  
your spirits there. Get Lady Sil to take you. I  
can hardly contain myself—I expect so much fun  
to-night, and my dress is a marvel. I see Lady  
Sil has cards out for a ball."

"Yes," moaned Lady Audrey, "there is my  
card—I am invited just like the crowd!"

"It is very hard for you, my poor dear, once



the sender out of the cards. However, go to-night, whatever happens. It will be the greatest fun."

But Lady Rose had unfortunately a great deal to endure before she attained her pleasure. On returning home to the Nutshell, she found her Gaby sitting with his head between his hands, the most woeful spectacle of despair and grief that painter ever pictured or sculptor moulded.

"Good gracious! Gaby, don't say your mother is dead!"

"No, she isn't dead, but I daresay she wishes she was. There is such a horrid report spread all over the town about me."

"You don't say so!—why, Gaby, you are now famous; you have done something to make the town talk! What can you want more?"

"I beg your pardon—all I desire is that the town leaves me alone, and you too. Luckily, I know better than to believe what they say of you."

"Gaby, don't be ridiculous—tell me immediately what has happened."

"It is reported that I got drunk every night of my life on board the yacht, and that you—I mean Lord Sil—however, that's the part I don't intend—I mean—that I do not believe—be it man or

woman that says it, I send the lie down their throats !”

“Who could have spread it ?” murmured Lady Rose, Conscience knocking loudly at her heart, and Wisdom whispering of the folly of trusting a creature like Lady Audrey.

“That is what I desire to find out. I am as sure as I am of myself that Baby and Doodleums would rather have blabbed of themselves ; and Sil would not venture to do so, because of the part he plays in the report.”

“I am not so sure of that ; men like him see their neighbours’ faults, but never their own.”

“Then all I have got to say, Rose, is this : I go straight to him, and tax him with it. I own I was in fault, but he shall see that in dragging me down into the mud he has dragged himself also.”

“Oh ! my darling Gaby, pray think of poor me !”

“I do it for your sake ; ’tis better you should be supposed to have flirted than that I connived at it. By every power in heaven and hell, I’ll right myself ! And if the world do cast aspersions upon you, believe me, Rose, your husband, devoted, as you know he has been, will be your patient slave—your dog ; he will show that he dotes on you still. And all my fami

round you, Rose ; and let me tell you, there is not a family more respected in London—no, not in the world!” And the tears burst forth from Gaby’s eyes as he recalled a scene he had only just had with his darling mother.

Lady Rose was moved at Gaby’s tears, and saw the matter was serious. Moreover, she was pleased with Gaby ; his manly sense of honour, his honest, good heart showed themselves forth to her in a light she had never seen before.

“Dear Gaby, listen. Do you think that stupid Lady Audrey has spread it about ? I am very vexed, but one day I told her some of the conversations I had had with Lord Sil, and she, always so envious, wondered how I had the opportunity ; and then—oh ! Gaby, I am so sorry !—then I did say that the sea air had such an effect.”

“Say no more—I see it all—I forgive you, Rose.” And with a magnanimity that gave Lady Rose quite a mental stab, he rose, and looking at her with sad, mournful eyes, touched her cheek with his lips, saying, “I have borne much for you, my wife, and I will try to bear this !” and he left the room.

Lady Rose sat down a little stunned. She had an idea she would like to cry, but crying always

made her eyes red, and she had some little plans for the evening that would necessitate her looking her very best. At the same time, she was a little angry. When she most bewailed herself for having married Gaby, she always did him the justice to say in her heart nobody could have suited her better, as he let her have all her own way.

Now, it appeared that she was fallen from her high estate ; he had absolutely had occasion to say "he forgave her." So singularly constituted was her odd little mind, that, acknowledging Gaby never looked better in her eyes, or stood higher in her esteem for his manly, honest indignation, she was not going to forgive him in a hurry, for having presumed "to forgive her." She must get him back into his normal state of allegiance and obedience, and then she would, perhaps, tell him on the whole he behaved very well. But he had presumed, and he must suffer for it.

Just as Lady Rose arrived at this conclusion, her mother was announced. One look at her face was quite sufficient. As if Gaby had not already almost worried her out of her senses, here was Lady Alwyn with a thousand cares looming on her brow.

Always a little afraid of her daughter, Lady

Alwyn had judged that her best tactics were to rush at once to the charge, and get in the first word.

"Rose, your father has sent me to you. He is shocked, he is scandalized at a report——"

"A report!—poor papa; why don't you, madam, give him some idea as to the worth of reports in London? I am sure you can tell from experience."

"Don't be impertinent, Rose. It is not exactly report, but he is naturally very apprehensive. He is obliged, as you know, once or twice a year to go and see his aunt, Lady Wyn."

"Oh! yes, that horrid creature, who is a disgrace to us all."

"She greeted your father with the news that you were following her example."

"Oh! mamma, and papa could believe that? Why, she is, or has been so wicked that she has not a soul to speak to her, that I ever see. Besides, she looks so wicked, with such bold, bad eyes, and such manners."

"Nevertheless, Rose, I can just remember she was prettier than you. She married her first cousin, Lord Wyn, who was your father's uncle. If they had had any children, you would not have been Lady Rose. However, she was so lovely that when

they went to Court the people stood up on chairs to catch a glimpse of her, and he was equally handsome, with that beautiful profile your father has. They were the handsomest couple ever seen. But she was the cleverest of the two, and he spoilt her. That is what alarms your father. He could deny her nothing, as your husband cannot deny you. So she presumed on it, and then went further and further, until there is no doubt about it, though this is only known in the family, that he destroyed himself. He really did, Rose; his sensitiveness of honour was quite as strong in him as in your father. He took laudanum, and was found dead in his chair. She found him herself, and it is presumed took from his dead hand the bottle out of which he had taken the laudanum. And then, being a most imperious, haughty, overbearing woman, she ordered the doctors to say he died of a fit; which they did, and it was all hushed up. But after his death she became perfectly abandoned, and from being a most beautiful woman, she gradually changed into the ugly, awful-looking creature she is now. It is not age that has made her so frightful, but wicked passions. They have stamped their nature upon her. It makes one shudder to look at her, she is like a Jezebel."

"I grant she is, mamma. The few times I have seen her going by in her carriage, made me perfectly sick to think she bore our family name."

"Your father has unfortunately to go to her, to see her sign her name to some document, and he has told me more than once he would rather give her double her jointure than do it. She always shocks and annoys him; and yesterday she said, in her wickedest way: 'So I hear your Rose is very like me. Well! good luck to her. Tell her to go on and amuse herself; when every door is closed against her, mine will be open; she will put new life and spirit into me. They tell me 'tis a very fast age, but I cannot help thinking I could teach her a few things.'"

"Horrid wretch!"

"Yes, truly, Rose, do be warned. Virtue is so precarious in London."

We have seen that the heart of Lady Rose was an odd one. If her mother had said no more, but trusted to the natural feeling of horror that Lady Rose felt at such a creature daring to speak of her in this fashion, it would have been well. But already in a state of irritation, Lady Rose, regardless of the evening's requirements, burst into a passion of tears, and asked her mother how she dared think

of her in conjunction with that creature?

"Virtue precarious in London!—it may be so to some; but I wish to know what I have done to be classed with such a woman, to be warned in this way? Why cannot I be trusted to take care of myself? And, let me tell you, I have taken care of myself. There is not a married woman in London who has had better reason for taking care of herself."

"Oh! Rose! Rose!" cried her mother. For though a complete woman of the world, it was in wretched little meannesses that she indulged; but she was so far capable of judging of the power of evil and temptation, that she was rather more horrified at her daughter's words than a better woman would have been. She knew what insecure footing was the basis of all boasting; and when it came to an absolute exultation as to the vast opportunities of going wrong, had she so desired, Lady Alwyn felt as if her daughter was already on the brink of the fatal precipice. And a sudden pang or smiting of the heart at having helped a little to bring this about, caused the worldly, hardened woman to burst into tears.

Knowing what "a miracle of virtue" she was, as Lady Rose told her husband, she took no no-



tice of her mother's tears—in fact, they only irritated her the more ; and seeing this, Lady Alwyn also lost her temper. It was very seldom that she gave way to tears ; and as they had no effect on her daughter, she assumed a scornful and indignant air, regarding her with cold disdain.

“ All I can say is, Rose, that everybody is crying you down—more because you are such an unnatural mother.”

“ I am glad it is nothing improper this time.”

“ But it is improper, you foolish creature ! There has your child been three weeks in town, and Mrs. Raby says you have never been to see it.”

“ I was very good to it at Christmas, and got rather fond of the animal while we were at Raby.”

“ And this is April ! I agree with Mrs. Raby, you are utterly without any affections whatever. Even your excellent husband, who spoils you, has his character taken away by you. When I first heard the report of what he did on board the yacht, I went straight to Lady Audrey. I knew, whatever had happened, you would have told her. And now I know, Rose, just as certain as I am sitting by you, that it is entirely owing to your foolish tattling that all this has come out about him.”

“ And I suppose you told the Rabys ?”

"No, Rose, I did not. With Adelaide still unmarried, and Sophia introduced this year, I could not do such a thing. But you are a very hardened creature, and always you were most undutiful. And if you will not take advice, you must go to the bad, and thank yourself that at all events Lady Wyn will be pleased to have your company."

So saying, Lady Alwyn suddenly withdrew. She had had the last word with her daughter, and endeavoured to find comfort in that thought. At the same time, she was not without a misgiving that she had done more harm than good. She was conscious she possessed no tact, a circumstance that had given her husband intolerable trouble, from the many scrapes into which her tongue and temper had led her. And as for the soothing sweetness of a mother's penetration, who gently and sagaciously allures the mind of a wayward child, she was utterly without it. Had she been a cottager's wife, she would have beaten her children upon the slightest provocation; and she so far carried out this idea, that on stepping into her carriage to go home, she felt heartily sorry she could not have Lady Rose well whipt and sent to bed.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"For what is music, if sweet words  
 Rising from tender fancies be not so?  
 Methinks there is no sound so gentle—none—  
 Not even the south wind young, when first he comes  
 Wooing the lemon flowers, for whom he leaves  
 The coasts of Basac: not melodious springs,  
 Tho' heard i' the stillness of their native hills:  
 Not the rich viol, trump, cymbal, nor horn,  
 Guitar, nor cittern—nor the pining flute  
 Are half so sweet as tender human words."

BARRY CORNWALL.

**A**ND so this poor little Rose was angered, mortified, and insulted beyond all powers of bearing. And the keenest mortification of all was that she had been thus insulted, and yet had nothing to bring forward as a token that her mode of life was the correct one—that if she was not highly considered, still she was the fashion; if she had no great rank, still the highest rank sought her company. And though she was a pauper,

still she was a magnificent pauper, and showed the world how paupers could live.

As she summed up all her efforts, her virtues, her struggles, and threw in with them her beauty, her liveliness, her wit, and her Nutshell, she was fain to confess to herself that she had gained no footing. What temporary elevation she possessed, she fought and struggled for, and very hard work it was to do so. Once more her poor little thoughts ran upon the old subject, "How was all this to end?"

"I started so well this year, I thought I was going to carry all before me. I took such pains and trouble to secure the Duke, and one evening with that stupid creature undid it all. What is it in her that the men see so delightful? She does not amuse them as I do. They haven't gone into any very great entertainments yet, and we have had our little dinners twice a week ever since the season began. I give up everything for society, and she gives up nothing. What more can I do? How is this all to end? And, as if this worry is not enough for me, Gaby goes into this absurd state about this report, which reminds me I will have it out with Audrey to-night. I have half a mind to punish her by not assisting her any fur-

ther with what she calls her righteous revenge. Righteous, indeed!—stupid, miserable creature!—shall I help her, or shall I not? But then I shall lose my fun, and I must have something to amuse me. And once I give way, I shall only shine as Lady Silborough chooses her light to fall on me, which is a thing I never—never will submit to. No! Mamma has tried to bully me. I won't be bullied—that is, no one shall bully me without seeing that I am all the worse for it. If papa had come instead of mamma—oh! my poor, dear, darling papa, are you unhappy about your little Rose? I saw him to-day in the Park, walking all alone in the crowd, apparently so absorbed as to see and hear no one. He looked thin and pale, and quite old, as if he had no life in him, and as if his clothes were all hanging on bones. And when Adelaide rode up to him, and spoke to him, what a sweet, beautiful, loving look came into his eyes! Adelaide is like papa. Mamma thinks I am the cause that she does not marry, but it is her own doing. She dotes upon papa, and she takes care mamma does not worry him. I really think, if it was not almost too much for me to believe of a sister of mine, Adelaide won't marry that she may be a comfort to papa. And what am I?—

well, I cannot help it—people should not bully me; and it is not everyone who has had such a terrible trial as mine. To find a girl, whom I despised as a girl, taking the place and position I designed for myself! I must have my revenge for that—yes, perhaps if I only succeed in making the simple Elizabeth do something exceedingly simple—if I can by any means just let a whiff of ridicule assail her—if I can get her to make a mistake, or commit some folly, I will forego everything else. I am not like Audrey, ill-natured. I don't wish to make her quarrel with Lord Silborough, or rather him with her; but I should like him to see and feel she is not so very perfect, after all. Oh! dear me, should I have felt like this had I been his wife? At all events, I should never have had to struggle to keep up my head as I am doing now. And he is easily pleased. Like most selfish men, one has only to attend to his appetite and his whims, to do anything with him. And one thing is very certain, let people say what they will, he is, and he always means to be, my friend. Good gracious! if I had been his wife, how I could have turned him round my finger! I could have done anything with him—and she never tries. She doesn't seem to care for any-

thing in particular. He would never have grown so fat and indolent had I been his wife. How I do go harping on that idea, knowing all the time it can never be realised! Such a waste of the finest position! I believe it is that which provokes me so. As Lady Silborough, London should have treated me as its queen. But I only get a weary, wan look in my eyes, teasing myself with all this thinking. I only wish I knew how it is all to end. I declare I am beginning to look faded, which reminds me to go and see after my dress; then I will read awhile. I have got the naughtiest book, which is sure to amuse me, and keep me from fretting."

But in spite of her book, Lady Rose still thought a good deal more than she liked. Something seemed to urge her to give up the contest, or at all events not to ally herself with the treacherous and ill-natured Lady Audrey.

"Only this once, just this once," said she to herself, as she surveyed herself arrayed in a dress so pretty and becoming, she was quite elated. "I must show myself to Gaby," she added, hungering for praise, and rushed into his dressing-room.

The good Gaby, in full dress, was on his knees, apparently saying his prayers. Lady Rose

fidgeted, in the hope of attracting his attention. But he diligently went through what he was doing. As he rose from his knees, his wife said,

"In the name of goodness, Gaby, what were you doing?"

"I was saying my prayers, Rose. I always do so when we are going out to make a night of it, as not only has the morning come before we get home, but I am often too tired to say them properly. Indeed, I am ashamed to say sometimes I have forgotten them. So I hit upon this plan, and I find it a very good one."

"I suppose it promised its mother always to say its prayers," said Lady Rose, remembering that she had to snub and tease him a little, to atone for what she called his airs about forgiveness.

"It would gladly have promised its mother," answered Gaby calmly, "only its mother knew that it promised itself to remember the Good God."

Lady Rose felt rebuked. So far from snubbing, was she not snubbed? She turned the conversation on her dress.

"It is most lovely, and you look very well in it, my little Rose."

His little Rose! Really if she did not think it something of a joke, Gaby was rather patronising



than meek. Something must be done most speedily, to bring him back to his submissive, coaxing ways. However, they were on their way to H—— House, and it was inconvenient to trouble her head about him, when she had so much more to think of—the effect of her dress upon the women, and of her beauty on the men, both of which were things absolutely necessary to note by Lady Rose. Her spirits depended upon the envy of the one, and the tribute of the other. She was very well satisfied with both, and her vanity being delightfully fed, she sat down by Lady Audrey in capital spirits.

“Do you know, Audrey, that you have got me into terrible disgrace, by letting out what I told you in confidence of what happened on board the yacht.”

“I did not let it out.”

“Who in the name of goodness could have done so?”

“It was Sil; he cannot get over your being thrown away upon such a man.”

Lady Rose looked at her in surprise. It was so unlike Lady Audrey to make this admission, that but for the delight it gave her vanity to think Lord Silborough was still under such concern for her, she would not have believed her.

"Pray don't let it be known that he is at the bottom of it, Audrey, for Gaby is in a most awful passion, and is ready to quarrel with Lord Sil to any amount."

"Perhaps he had better do so," retorted Lady Audrey, with a sort of grim smile.

"Audrey, I hope you don't intend dragging me into any scrape to suit yourself."

"I don't very well see how I can. If my brother likes you, and chooses to take your part, what have I got to do with it?"

"True!—when did you see Lord Sil?"

"This afternoon he was with me an hour or two!"

"Discoursing of the perfections and successes of his Elizabeth, I suppose?"

"He was talking of you chiefly!"

"Was he?"

"Yes; he said he thought London horribly dull, except where you were to be found. By-the-bye, you have never told me what scene is to be enacted to-night, by way of amusing us?"

"Ah! yes—and it is time we went and placed ourselves. Lady Tantan is here, they always tolerate her in this house, as you and I do, my dear, in ours. I must say she is vastly good-natured and

generous—she is always sending me the loveliest flowers.”

“Is she angry that Lady Sil has not noticed her cards?”

“Not she; she laughs at it, and is going to revenge herself in this way. You know she is utterly unabashable—brass and brazen don’t express her—when she takes it into her head to do a thing. Lady Sil always dances one, if not two, dances with the blessed one. Just as she is hanging on his arm, Lady Tantan means to march up, and say loudly—and you know what her voice and laugh are—‘How do you do, Lady Silborough? I am delighted to see you at last! Will you introduce me to the Duke?’ Now, we all know what a nervous, shy creature she is; and of course, under the circumstances, she will acknowledge the acquaintance.”

“She may be induced out of politeness to acknowledge the acquaintance; but no Silborough would ever commit such a breach of good manners as to introduce one person to another without previously learning if it is agreeable to both.”

“But she is not born a Silborough, my dear,” replied Lady Rose, looking a little saucily at her beloved friend Audrey.

"She would not dare to do it if Silborough is standing by."

"Oh! we hope he will. We must have her completely in the toils—or not at all. It would only have to be done over again, if he did not witness the absolute fact of her admission of the acquaintance."

"Well, I hope it will succeed. Let us go."

Hearing the loud laugh and voice of Lady Tantan, they drew near.

"Ah! yes," she was saying, "I believe it has been said that women were intended to do as much, or the same, as men; but from some inferiority they just fell short of it. Now, I deny that. 'Tis just the other way, and I am ready to prove it; riding, racing, jumping, or swimming."

"A public trial, my lady?" cried a voice.

"Oh! of course."

And she bandied a few words with the men that always surrounded her, in a manner that caused the really refined Lady Audrey to shudder.

That she, a Silborough, should have suffered herself to be introduced to such a vulgar creature, to say nothing of anything worse, was most dreadful. But of course she would never have incurred the disgrace if it had not been for Lady Silbo-

rough. She was to blame—she ought to be punished. And no better punishment could be devised than that of being forced into an acquaintance with this obnoxious person. She longed to see it done.

At the moment a sort of murmur in the crowd announced the coming of one who commanded the worship of it.

“She is coming!” whispered Lady Rose; “she is on the Duke’s arm, and Lord Sil is behind with the Duchess. Let us make more space. Oh! what fun!”

The crowd opened, making way for the beautiful and stately Elizabeth. And none could look at her without admiration. The angry sister-in-law, the envious Lady Rose, the bold, unabashed woman of the world, each with the admiring crowd around, could not but acknowledge they saw before them a woman, beautiful in the sanctity of her womanhood. The royalty of inward happiness beamed from her eyes—a girlish blush and half shy smile shewed her perception of the admiration that broke out in murmurs around her. There was not a trace of vanity or self-gratification, but a sweet pleasure that she was giving pleasure—an innocent delight that she was commended.

At this moment, stepping forward with somewhat of arrogance, in her untuneable, unfeminine voice, Lady Tantan, holding out her hand, said,

“How do you do, Lady Silborough? We are delighted to welcome you this season among us.”

Elizabeth turned her stately head, and fixed her eyes, beaming with their serene light, full upon Lady Tantan. The blush of pleasure did not leave her cheeks, nor the sweet smile her lips. But some mysterious subtle change passed over the young face—not of reproof, not of scorn, not even so much as a flash of astonishment. Was it pity?

In soft, clear tones, with an inimitable grace and courtesy, yet with startling significance, Lady Silborough answered,

“Pardon me; we—are not acquainted,” and passed on.

## CHAPTER XXV.

“What’s that, which Heaven to man endears,  
And that which eyes no sooner see  
Than the heart says, with floods of tears,  
Ah ! that’s the thing which I would be?”

C. PATMORE.

THE morning after this scene all London was ringing with its story. Those who had witnessed it were never tired of repeating it, and those who were not so fortunate could not hear the description too often. Lord Silborough had recognized his wife’s share in it by merely saying,

“I was much pleased, Elizabeth, with the manner in which you put down that most objectionable woman. You did it exactly as I like.”

The Duchess was much more impressed with the importance of the act, while she could not withhold her admiration of the manner in which it was done.

“I think, Elizabeth, you proved last night that on an emergency you are equal to the occasion. Old and experienced as I am, I should have felt

puzzled myself what to do. At all events, I could not have restrained my astonishment, and yet you showed none. Were you warned?"

"Only thus much. I felt that leaving cards without the usual introduction was an act that must bid me prepare for others. It was one of those intuitions, dear madam, of which I have told you. As there was to be no doubt about the refusal of the intimacy, there was but one way to act, in case the matter was pushed further."

"Nothing could be more admirable than your manner. I am curious to know what effect it had upon one so bold and unabashed as Lady Tantan."

"Ah! madam, I love my own sex dearly! I hope I did not hurt her feelings!"

"If she has any feelings, Elizabeth, I hope you did, for she could entertain no anger at your manner. At the same time, she might be cut to the heart at finding virtue quite as bold as vice, and yet most gentle. This is the feeling which will, I hope, prick her, and do her good."

"The affair is too notorious to please me. I am more shy now it is past than I was at the doing of it."

"It is very natural that you should feel so. At the same time, the sensation that it has caused in London pleases me. It shows that the multitude



• acknowledge any attempt to purify their manners, and stay the rapid progress of impudent vice and rude arrogance. A few more such scenes, a steady resistance to such encroachments by those who must always reign in London by reason of their position, will do more good than we can conceive."

"I have a sort of feeling that people are not, after all, really so bad as they themselves try to prove themselves to be. I think they but weakly follow what is termed the fashion."

"That is very true. Turn their heads the other way, and giving them a good leader, they will probably follow as obediently as if in harness."

As for the effect of the failure of their scheme upon the conspirators, it affected them all three in their different fashions. Lady Rose was alternately crying and laughing—crying that she had failed to bring down Lady Silborough to her own level, laughing at the discomfiture of her friend Audrey and Lady Tantan.

"The scene was as good as a play, Gaby, though how the Automaton ever screwed up her courage to do such a deed, is more than I can say. 'Tis a good child, and its husband having told it it mustn't make friends with naughty people, why, it simply did what it was bid."

"Whether she was bidden or not, Lady Silborough deserves the thanks of all London for her courage. And my mother, who saw it, cannot speak of it without tears in her eyes."

"I acknowledge she was not the least offensive in her manner."

"Offensive, Rose! If Lady Tautan has anything left in her of a woman's heart, Lady Silborough's manner ought to have touched her to the quick. My mother says she reminded her of the fact that virtue looks most beautiful when accompanied by mercy. If I was Lord Sil, shouldn't I be proud of her!"

"You have no business to be proud of anyone but me!"

"I said if I were Lord Sil."

Lady Rose pouted to no effect. As she sat alone, pondering over everything, ever and anon rose to her mind the change taking place in Gaby. It even occurred to her there was a certain resemblance to Lady Silborough in his character—a simplicity and singleness of purpose conspicuous in both, leading them, if a thing was to be done, to do it as best they could. No sort of selfish feeling seemed to possess either. Never yet had she persuaded Gaby to borrow a farthing, never could

she prevail on him to doubt his friends or speak scandal of his enemies. And even in the quiet acknowledgment of the good habit of saying his prayers before he "made a night of it," Lady Rose felt intuitively it was just the sort of "good habit" Lady Silborough would pursue.

"What a pity it is they did not marry!" she half laughed to herself; "they might have gone about together, improving the whole world; while Lord Sil and I would have made it merry."

But even as she said these words, Lady Rose was forced to acknowledge in her heart she could not have loved Lord Sil as she did Gaby. Long ago she fancied herself in love with him; but a more intimate knowledge of his character did away with the love; while it left all the ardent wish strong as ever to have the use of his name and position.

"It is my vocation to reign, though I had a selfish, indolent king to reign with me. I wonder what the saintly Elizabeth sees in her 'Ha-r-ry' to love him so? She must know he is very inferior to herself."

Lady Rose had started a question which not only she could not answer, but since the world began it has never been answered. In every age,

in every state of society, are seen husbands of the highest organization of heart and mind, devotedly in love, and even subservient to wives of so inferior a disposition, it was marvellous to spectators to note the difference and observe the fact. While the number of devoted, loving, long-suffering, ill-used wives might people a heaven of themselves, if a peculiar one was accorded them by way of atonement for their miseries.

Lady Silborough was not the only woman in the world who showed the true quality of her womanhood by seeing in her husband no other character than that of husband, the man she had sworn to love and obey. A feeling of repugnance, as we have chronicled, beset her before she married him; but having done so, she did and would cling to him, through weal, through woe, through indifference, ill-temper, estrangement, if such should be her lot. She never stayed or thought to analyze his temperament; he was her husband, a character so sacred as to be beyond impeachment. A most beneficent, merciful gift, somewhat akin to that bountiful, overflowing goodness that looks on all men alike, but seeks diligently for the "lost sheep," leaving the "ninety-nine" safe in the fold to take care of themselves.

As for Lady Audrey, she was less disappointed than might be supposed at the failure of Lady Rose's plan—in fact, she grimly smiled at it altogether. It was such a silly, foolish plan, leading to no great ends. Merely to make her husband a little angry, was not what Lady Audrey desired. The commonest sense in the world could have said he would never separate from his wife, simply because an impudent woman dared to speak to her. She would have had no objection to witness her discomfiture, if she had been discomfited; but, on the whole, considering she was now a Silborough, Lady Audrey was rather glad the woman she hated behaved in a creditable manner. No, no, Lady Audrey had her plan—a private one. She would have no confidants until it was all ripe for accomplishment. She had a certain thing to accomplish—namely, a permanent separation between her brother and his wife. This idea occupied her night and day, and as it involved the certain restoration of her husband to her society, she was led to think it a most praiseworthy, proper idea. As long as she and her husband were once more united, the separation of any other husband and wife was of no moment to her. What could it matter? People were always separating now,

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and appeared to care nothing about it. Now, with her it was very different. She was as a body without a soul, parted from her darling Buckhurst, and to re-unite them together was not only an absolute necessity, but her bounden duty. If she felt a little qualm at the thought that to do this she must bespatter the illustrious name of Silborough with a little ugly mud, after all the end justified the means, and Sil would soon elevate his head again as high among the multitude as ever.

So she thought, and planned, and plotted. Already was she secretly working, and not without some degree of sagaciousness. The tenacity of her desire awoke in her a rather stronger amount of wisdom than was usual. At present the effect of this was seen in the banishment of her usual peevishness. She was so amiable and good-tempered, that her brother permitted her the run of Silborough House. While the gentle Elizabeth, without experiencing as regarded herself any radical change in Lady Audrey's opinion of her, yet met half way all her clumsy, hypocritical advances towards sisterly affection and confidence.

As for Lord Silborough, he began rather to like his sister; and having many leisure moments, was

often in the habit of calling in Green Street, where she had always ready to amuse him the lively Lady Rose; and if not, she sugared him with little soppets, "such as he loved," of praise of himself and his Elizabeth, little odd bits of scandal, and funny things about town, that Lady Rose catered for her, and which a sister might tell where a friend could not.

As for Lady Tantan, we have no means of knowing how she took her rebuff. In public she was as noisy and loud as ever, let us hope she often was visited in private by the remembrance of that gracious, beseeching look, and the fact that if she did not let it enter with subtle power into her heart, a time would come when nothing would sound more appalling in her ears than the gentle words, "We are not acquainted." "Too late, too late!"

The time of the Silborough ball was approaching. Lord Silborough was a man who liked to occupy his mind in decorations, and part of whose daily business in life was to criticise ladies' dress. Having confided to his sister that he meant his wife's dress at this ball to surpass anything that had been seen in London, she recommended him to consult Lady Rose Raby. Her taste in dress was

undeniable ; and so it ought to have been, considering the time she devoted to it.

This advice led to long consultations between Lady Rose and Lord Silborough, and they were seen on several occasions driving about together. If they did not confine their conversation wholly to Lady Silborough's dress, that was clearly no business of anyone to inquire. They were about a very innocent and praiseworthy object, and if London should chance to espy them, and make a rout, they had only to explain, to have the laugh on their side.

But London happened at that moment to be occupied by something very notorious and exciting, so the doings of Lord Silborough and Lady Rose escaped observation. They were only watched by the eager, hungry eyes of Lady Audrey, and the more she watched the more was she pleased. If Lady Rose had the not unnatural, and at the same time imprudent idea in her head, of devoting her energies and talents to creating rather a *bizarre* dress for Lady Silborough, she was wise enough to dismiss it at once from her mind. Lord Silborough knew too much about dress himself to risk deceiving him ; while the firmness of character so lately shown in such a conspicuous manner, w



tively prevent Lady Silborough from wearing a dress she neither liked nor looked well in. On the contrary, it must be Lady Rose's endeavour to increase Lord Silborough's interest in her, by devoting herself, as if 'twas a labour of love, to inventing, superintending, and, so far as she could, fulfilling his wishes even beyond his hopes. 'Tis true, she laughed at herself very often for finding herself in the ridiculous position of making that woman more lovely and admired, whom she would willingly see covered with small-pox, and regarded by nobody.

"However," she consoled herself with saying, "it cannot be helped ; if I never see her as I wish her, still Lord Sil is my friend, and I must keep him as such. If I am reduced to shine in any other light than my own, it shall be through him, not her."

And so, in following out this idea, Lady Rose forgot how "precarious was virtue in London." Feeling certain in her heart she really cared for Gaby, and only envied the position Lord Silborough could have given her, she forgot, like Lady Audrey, that the world was in the dark as to these feelings. They could only judge of what they saw. However, as we said before, fortunately London was

much engaged at this time. So Lord Silborough and Lady Rose transacted all their business most comfortably. The result of their joint efforts was not only a most exquisite dress for Lady Silborough, but the present to Lady Rose of one for herself.

“As a small token of my gratitude for all your trouble,” said his polite lordship, “and of my regard for the spirit with which you bear your lot.”

Thus, we fear, they had been talking of other things besides dress. As the lace alone on it was worth two or three hundred pounds, the little pauper felt she was greatly rewarded for stifling her envy, and being good-natured, even if no other good befell her. She was strongly minded to have in pink what Lady Silborough was to wear in blue. But prudence prevailed ; and throwing her heart into the matter, she so disposed her lace to suit her prettiness, that when she tried on her dress, to note its effect, she was able to agree with her maid and her milliner.

“It was the becomingest dress her ladyship ever had. She looked exactly like a beautiful moss-rose bud.”

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"For hate is chill, and love is warm,  
And the tale of youth is sweet ;  
But the west wind tells of a fearful storm  
That my soul has yet to meet."

ANON.

ON the morning of the Silborough ball, Lady Rose had a visit from her friend, Lady Audrey. It was a long and secret conference, of which but a few words reached the public ear. .

"Oh ! as for that," said Lady Rose, "I have no fear. I can soon bring him to the bare act of a tender concern ; but I do not see what you desire to effect by it."

"I did what you told me, going to H—— House. And, you know, you failed there to do what you promised."

"But we had no idea the simple Elizabeth would show such a spirit."

"And I want to show her that this spirit, her present popularity, her beauty, and Sil's love for

her, are not capable of preventing him admiring you."

"Now, Audrey, I fancy you are not telling me the whole truth. You are keeping back part of your plan, and design to make a cat's-paw of me."

"If that is your opinion," answered Lady Audrey, with wonderful calmness and presence of mind, "I will say no more. The idea only came into my head last night, because such a scene can only be gone through at Silborough House. But as you don't seem to see it, by all means let the opportunity go."

"But how do I know," said Lady Rose, nibbling at the notion, so pleasing to her vanity, of just trying to see if she could not give Lady Silborough a little stab of some sort—"how do you know, if I do get him into the library, and work up a scene, that she will come opportunely, as you say?"

"Of course, I shall take care of that."

"'Tis a very clumsy plan, Audrey."

"I own 'tis not much better than yours, so I'll take my leave."

"I'll think over it, and send you a little note to say whether I will consent or not."

"Just as you please. I am going with the

children to the dancing-school, and shall not be at home until six."

Lady Audrey felt much like the spider entrapping the fly, and went about all the business she had to do with a certainty in her mind she should have a note agreeing to her plan. Her plan!—had she confided all to Lady Rose? It is to be feared, by the unusual smile of satisfaction on her face, by a certain odd assumption of intelligence and wisdom which she could not restrain herself from showing, that her plan, though to be helped by Lady Rose, was much deeper, more effective and sure, than that giddy little creature imagined. And though we sometimes see that, by the simplest means the greatest effects are produced, it is something wonderful that Lady Audrey should have no misgivings as to the result. She had shown wisdom, forethought, and great forbearance in the arranging and preparing her plan; and all these qualities so surprised herself, she could not for a moment entertain any idea of failure.

Like the man who built his ship, and then could not get it out of the dock to launch—or the amateur architect who reared the most delightful house, but forgot the staircase—so did Lady Audrey felicitate herself upon the scheme, born, not

the night before, as she said, but ever since the cards were out for the Silborough Ball, thought over, corrected, examined, brought to perfection, and totally incapable of collapse. And yet, at the onset, Lady Rose had almost failed her. Lady Rose was the power that was to move her ship into the water—Lady Rose was the staircase to her house. She had never for one instant suspected a failure through her, and yet how nearly had it happened! But she was sure of her now, and after dropping her children at the dancing-school, she went about to different houses, scattering a seed, the fruits of which she hoped to reap that evening.

Meantime, Lady Rose had another visitor—this time it was her father. In his eyes she read anxiety, not to say unhappiness, but his words were all love and kindness. Not a hint that might be construed into a reproach—not a word that the most sensitive conscience could take, and with it lacerate her heart and temper.

“Somehow, my darling, I do not feel as strong as I used to do. I do not enjoy life. I can remember, as a boy, thinking that merely to breathe was delicious; and now, Rose, I do not seem to care to go to bed, yet still less do I care to rise up in the morning.”

"Dearest papa," said the pretty creature, looking still prettier as she hovered lovingly around him, "perhaps you are a little bilious. I have heard it is a very lowering thing. You have nothing on your mind?—about Adelaide or Sophie?"

"No, Rose—nothing of either Adelaide or Sophia. And the more I know of your husband the better I like him. How pleasant it is to hear him always talking of, as he is thinking of, his Rosie! So unlike some young men!"

Lady Rose winced. Within these few days Gaby's love had been shaken to its foundation. She could not conceal from herself, either, that though he had forgiven, he could not forget her part in the report circulated about him, or that his love was changing. Perhaps he was becoming like the young men her father talked of, and she was amazed at the pang this thought gave her. But she replied,

"Indeed, dear papa, he is a very good fellow—perhaps no one but me knows how good."

Her father's loving tender eyes rested on her for a moment. "Thank God for that!"

Rose was puzzled at both look and manner.

"I hear, my dear, from Adelaide, you have a very pretty dress for the ball to-night. I half

thought to excuse myself; but I think I must come, to see my pretty Rose in it."

"Oh! do, papa; 'tis the loveliest thing! Did you hear that Lord Silborough gave it to me?"

"Yes, my dear; it was very kind of him."

Lady Rose had wondered to herself for a moment if her father was come to expostulate about her receiving a dress from Lord Silborough, which circumstance she had made no secret. And much as she "doted on dear old pa," she had made up her mind not to forego the wearing of this dress for the love of any one. But it seemed that her father had no such objection to make. Therefore Rose told him the whole history of how and why it had been given her.

"I am glad, dear, you exerted yourself so much for Lady Silborough. She is a marvellous creature, they tell me."

"Oh! no, papa; she is pretty, and nice, and natural; but you know what London is—when it takes to like a person, it adores that person."

"'Tis well, Rose, when they adore the right person."

"They used to adore me, you know, papa."

"My love, you have one great advantage, a husband who adores you, and a father whose only



happiness now consists in the happiness of his children."

"That was what you always said, dear papa; and your children would be most ungrateful if they caused you grief."

And it was in this way they talked, simple enough; but when Lord Alwyn left his daughter, she sat down as nearly miserable as so giddy a heart could be.

"He fears something for me; and yet, so unlike mamma, he neither advised nor upbraided me. Has Gaby said anything to him? Dear, dear papa, I feel as if I could do anything for you! I cannot bear that unhappy look. Has Audrey been saying anything? I won't do what Audrey wishes—yes, dear papa, I will give it up, to please you. And yet, as Audrey says, 'tis the last opportunity, and I had just come to the conclusion it was not, after all, so bad an idea of Audrey's, just to alarm her about her husband's affection. I should just like to see her as miserable as I am for the minute—of course it would be for no longer. Lord Sil quite treats me as a sister now, he says. And there can be no harm in my saying I have been asking his advice as a brother, and the whole scene in the library, with nobody but Audrey to

see. And positively this shall be my last attempt. After this I will just submit to my fate. I will be domestic, and perhaps pet Gaby. And, oh, dear me! there is the child! I will go in for being a motherly mother. What an absurd creature I am, always wanting to do something out of the common! But, dear papa, I promise you this. Only just let me have this little bit of fun to-night, and see that too happy, self-complaisant Elizabeth look horrified and scandalized, and I will do nothing for the future but be a pattern of goodness. I am so easily turned and ruled by kindness."

When Lady Rose applauded herself for this, she seemed to have forgotten the exquisite good-humour of her husband. She only thought of the difference between the bullying of her mother and the tender love of her father. Even when still full of this she wrote the note expected by Lady Audrey, stipulating that if she complied with Audrey's fancy, it was only on condition that Audrey should write back to say that it was at her request she, Lady Rose, sought a private interview with Lord Silborough. To this she received the following reply :

"MY DEAR ROSE,—I entreat you by our friend-

ship to obtain this favour of my brother, as I feel sure you are the only person to whom he would grant it. Your affectionate friend,

“AUDREY BUCKHURST.”

Lady Audrey was as much pleased with this nice, sensible letter of Audrey's, as Lady Audrey was pleased at her diplomacy in writing it. It was her last lure. As for the note ever turning up and compromising her, Lady Audrey indulged in her ugly smile, as she murmured to herself, “You won't have time to think of it, Rose, my dear!” And so they all dressed for the ball, none so calm as Lady Audrey, few so heedless as Lady Rose, and none more happy than Lady Silborough, who, radiantly beautiful in her new dress, received her company with so much artless pleasure and sweetness that they were captivated.

Lord Silborough's arrangements were all of first-rate order. He felt that the whole of London would talk of him on the morrow—of his beautiful wife, her exquisite dress, his happy arrangements, the loveliness of the flowers, the perfection of the band, the unique character of the supper, with the profusion of costly wines. Yes, he had determined his ball should be the ball of the season, one not

talked of for a day, and forgotten, but elevated into the dignity of a date, from which people would calculate the more common-place engagements they had to fulfil. And he fully deserved all the praise that was bestowed on his ball.

"This is like fairy-land!" observed Bene to his grandmamma.

"And no fairy-land ever had a lovelier queen," she replied. "Who could have imagined a London sitting-room turned into such a lovely scene?"

And their opinions might be heard in every part of the room.

At one o'clock all their admiration and delight broke out afresh. For a large curtain was withdrawn, and it seemed as if the company looked far into a beautiful garden, wherein were innumerable bowers, in which were tables laden with costly and bright things to please the eye, with everything the wildest fancy could long for to delight the palate.

Nobody ate a better or more substantial supper than Lady Audrey. She was approaching the happy moment of achieving her wishes, and she had not the least apprehension as to failure. Nay, she was more secure than ever, for Sil, her dear brother, a little intoxicated with flattery and applause, was also a little——But he was to be ex-

cused. He had been acting the hospitable host, and taking so many dowagers in to supper, and having to drink wine with each, he was for a few moments—it would soon go off if he did not go in to supper again—just a little merry.

“Sil,” whispered his sister, “poor Lady Rose, she has had no supper yet.”

“No supper! How is that? Rose, come along with me. It would be a blot on my name for ever if you, of all people, did not enjoy my ball.”

He was certainly very merry—never had he so far forgotten Silborough *hauteur* as to lose his own individuality and manners, and to call her Rose before so many people! The vanity of Lady Rose was such, that whether a man had all his senses, or only a part, still she accepted his homage with pride and delight.

Lord Silborough drank some more champagne, and called her Rose again. Nothing could be better. As she rose from the supper-table, she whispered that she wanted a word with him on an important matter alone. He clasped her arm warmly under his. Lady Rose was not without a qualm that he required her support to steady himself, when, saying, “Come along to my room,” he took her there.

What was Lady Rose's important business never transpired, but Lady Silborough, having been told by Audrey her husband wanted her in his room, went swiftly there. Her soft, floating draperies made as little noise as her soft footfall; and as she entered the room, her face all beaming, she saw Lady Rose standing with her back to the door, both hands on Lord Silborough's shoulders, while he, full fronting Elizabeth, had a hand placed on each side of Lady Rose's face, and, even at the very moment of his wife's entrance into the room, he stooped and kissed the pretty pouting lips held up to his.

There was a large mirror behind Lord Silborough, which reflected not only his figure, but that of the astonished Elizabeth. A little mischievous face was reflected over his shoulder, who gave an affected cry, as it seemed to catch sight of the figure in the doorway, but so far from shrinking out of Lord Silborough's embrace, she only clung the closer. And thus they stood, each apparently stiffened into the rigidity of marble; except those wicked, mischievous eyes reflected in the mirror. "Oh!" thought the owner of them, "if she will only cry out, scream, do anything to show me I have irritated her at last!"

There was a movement, it was a catching of the slender fingers, as if endeavouring to collect the long folds of her dress.

"She will turn and fly," thought Lady Rose, vexed.

At that moment a buzz of voices sounded; they came nearer—at once into the passage leading to the room.

"Yes, Lord Alwyn, 'tis too true, I fear. I beg you and Mrs. Raby will accompany me, to convict her and help poor Lady Silborough. My brother's infatuation is dreadful!"

In half a moment of time Lady Rose perceived that she was indeed a cat's-paw. The stupid, dun-der-headed Lady Audrey had been too many for her. In the same half second there rose before her the intolerable anguish of shame and exposure, the unutterable misery of the chance of a separation from her darling Gaby, merely for an act of folly. The words broke from her lips, while she turned as white as the woman she meant to humble: "I am lost—lost!"

In a moment Elizabeth came to life, as it were. She was by their side in an instant.

"Sit down, Rose," she said calmly. "Your hair is tumbled. Harry, give me the comb."

When Lady Audrey entered like an insane representation of Tragedy, her eyes glaring, followed by Lord Alwyn, Mrs. Raby, and several more people, the sight that presented itself was simple enough. Lady Rose was on a low seat—Lady Silborough was smoothing her hair. My lord was lolling in an arm-chair.

Lady Silborough glanced up and read in the countenance of Lady Audrey, and some of those crowding in, that somehow they did not believe in their own eye-sight, and, moreover, did not intend to believe in it. Something more must be done to convince them.

Elizabeth turned Lady Rose's face towards her, as if to see that her hair was properly arranged, and then with her girlish laugh, so sweetly, softly gay and musical, suddenly stooped, and with her pure lips took away the kiss that ought never to have been placed on those of Lady Rose. Then turning with her bright smile to Lord Alwyn, as if in excuse for the act, said,

"She looks so pretty to-night. Now, Harry, your partner is ready."

Lord Silborough, with the Silborough dignity in highest force, came forward, and offered his arm; and Lady Rose, with a charming grace, rose and



put the tips of her fingers on the arm offered, and with a little playful tap of the fan on dear, darling papa's shoulder, they both went off, as decorous and highly-bred a couple as could be seen. Lord Alwyn was about to say something, and Mrs. Raby seemed eager, but both were stopped by Lady Silborough.

"Rose's hair came down ; my lord brought her here, and sent for me to remedy the matter. You may be sure I did my best, seeing how much indebted I am to your Rose for the beauty of my dress."

Lord Alwyn's eyes assumed a joyful, happy look, Mrs. Raby's brow cleared, the rest of the crowd rushed back to the ball-room ; they had been called to see something most particular, and there was nothing, and they were losing all the fun of the dancing.

Lady Audrey was sitting down a little stupefied, but still somehow convinced her fine plot had succeeded. The morrow would prove it.

"Lady Silborough, permit me to say how much happiness it gives me to see the terms you are on with our pretty, foolish, wayward Rose. You are not the person to kiss another, if you do not love her."

“Thank you, Mrs. Raby, for your kind opinion. I have to thank her for taking my duty in the yacht, making the voyage so much more pleasant for my lord. I am going now just to take a peep at my children. Will you come with me?”

Nugent was awake. “My mumsey promised to come and see me, so I lay awake. But, mumsey, darling, how pale you look !”

## CHAPTER XXVII.

“Far more it imports men to know,  
 To feel, to prove each other's worth,  
 Than on that fame their thoughts bestow  
 To which the past has given birth.  
 Call forth the living spirit's power,  
 And use them for this world of ours.”

MRS. C. TINSLEY.

WHEN Lady Silborough, with Mrs. Raby, returned to the ball-room, they found the Duke of Stradarven apparently waiting for them.

“My dance, I think,” said he.

As Mrs. Raby passed on into the crowd, a much happier woman than when she left it, Bene said to Elizabeth,

“There is a very ugly report percolating all through the ball-room. I have had to order Gaby into the custody of Nubs and Nigger, to keep him quiet. I promised him to speak to you.”

“What can I do?” she said anxiously.

"I have traced the report to Lady Audrey ; it seems it has been smouldering for some days, and burst into flame to-night."

"Shall we get up a counter report?"

"Excellent, Lady Silborough—I will go to the bottom of the room and spread it. Will you go and sit by my grandmother—it will be up at the top of the room before I get there."

"It must be something a little uncommon."

"Will you do me the honour to let it be about you and me?"

"By all means."

"And you will endorse it by a little scene with me when I join you again?"

"Of disdain?"

"Yes—of the most scornful nature."

They separated. On nearing the bottom of the ball-room, where a desperate chattering and excitement were going on, Bene was greeted with a chorus of voices, saying,

"Here's the Duke!—here is Stradarven!—he will be sure to know. Bene, Bene, what is all this about Lord Silborough and Lady Rose?"

"Lady Rose!—I wish it was Lady Rose," he replied.

was she angry?—who discovered them? Well, I

"My dear fellow, don't look in such a state of utter despair! Is it Lord Sil? What has he done?"

"Lord Sil!—would that it were Lord Sil! Let me pass—I must go home."

A mysterious instinct, or a sort of free-masonry sign, roused the Baby, who was lounging with Doodleums on a luxurious settee.

"Poor fellow!" murmured Baby; "I was afraid he would be done for to-night."

"She is so dangerously lovely, and so alluringly good," responded Doodleums, in his indolent voice.

The two linked their arms together, and began to prepare to pass through the crowd.

"Who is so lovely, so good?—what is it?—who is the victim? Do tell me—oh! pray tell me!—I never let out secrets—what has happened?"

"Poor Bene!" murmured Baby.

"Too lovely Lady Silborough," responded Doodleums. "Goodness gracious!—God bless my soul!—then 'tis nothing to do with Lord Sil and Lady Rose. No, how can you think such a thing?—they were dancing together a moment ago. But the Duke and Lady Silborough—who would have thought it? What happened, do you know?—Were they in the study?—he on his knees?—

am not surprised. People of cold, stiff manners are often like sky-rockets, and go off with nothing but a puff."

"Doodleums," murmured Baby, "what a pity it is to see the young creatures so eager after this sort of thing, and so ready to believe it."

"They are not young, Baby, nor are they women—they are little demons in disguise."

Again a torrent of questions, a shower of wonders, exclamations, and sundry more of little demon remarks.

"I always thought her sly," said a childish voice, coming out of a very youthful mouth.

"You little pitiful thing," said another young voice, low and concentrated with repressed anger, "go to bed, child; and if you can look as high as the stars, see the difference there is between you and Lady Silborough."

Baby turned to look at the speaker.

"The voice was that of Lady Adelaide Alwyn," whispered Doodleums.

"Lady Adelaide," said Baby, looking over the crowd, "engaged next dance?"

"No."

"Do me the honour?"

"With much pleasure."

"Lady Adelaide," said Doodleums, "have you a gallo for me?"

"Yes—one."

"Thanks."

"She deserves to be noticed. We must tell Bene of her, he must also ask her to dance."

"He must. As for the little Demons, if they wait for us as partners, they are likely to dance no more to-night."

"Poor little Demons!—if they only knew what we see coming out of their mouths when they speak thus, Baby!"

"They would see that which they are, Doodleums."

Meantime, the chattering and confusion were great. By the time Baby and Doodleums reached the upper end of the room, they found a dense crowd watching with breathless interest the Duke enter by a side door. He advanced, then retired; finally he appeared to make an effort, and with an air most deeply, humbly penitent and deferential, he approached Lady Silborough, and asked her to dance.

"No," she answered, shortly and abruptly.

Apparently he fled, as if stricken by a blow. But, after an hour or so, he was discovered danc-

ing, full of life and spirits, with Lady Adelaide Alwyn.

As for the multitude, being quite ready to swallow one bit of scandal, they found two too many. They were puzzled and confounded. Those who wished to see Lady Rose in a mess inclined to her scandal; those who had a delight in witnessing the high brought low, were eager about the Silborough affair; but, unable to get at the real facts of either, finally forgot both, in the eager desire to make the most of this, the best ball of the season.

"Thank you, Baby—I am charmed with you, my excellent Doodleums. One fire, they say, puts out another, so Lady Silborough and I concocted a scandal which should smother the other."

"A capital idea, Bene; her rebuff to you was inimitable, but I see you have made it up."

"Oh! yes, she is most forgiving. Where is our poor Gaby?"

"He has gone home—Lady Rose was tired."

"I think Gaby is going to be a happier man—I should not wonder but Gaby will turn out a very happy man."

"No one deserves it more."

"No one."



"Sil is beginning to look bored. I think he wishes us all in bed."

"Let us go and compliment him on his ball—Sil loves a little soothing."

"The best soothing is to tell him we are going. I fear, poor fellow, he will have a headache in the morning."

"'Tis daylight now. Look at it paling the lamps, and making every girl look hideous but our lovely hostess."

"What a love she is!"

And so this famous ball ended.

What passed between Lord and Lady Silborough, when left to themselves, nobody knows. What passed between Lady Audrey and her pillow has never been divulged. What passed between Gaby and his Rose could easily be seen. She cried herself to sleep on his bosom, and he arose in the morning the happiest of men. He brought his own sweet little darling Rose a cup of tea, and with it a note.

"Oh! Gaby, 'tis from her, Lady Silborough—I dare not open it!"

"I dare," said Gaby the fearless.

This was the contents of this fearful note :—

"DEAR ROSE,—Will you drive out with me to-day? Come to luncheon. Your affectionate

"ELIZABETH SILBOROUGH."

"Oh! Gaby, I dare not go alone; she will upbraid me."

"You shall go alone," said Gaby the arbitrary; "and she won't upbraid you," added Gaby the confident.

Lady Rose went, her heart palpitating. Elizabeth met her on the stairs, kissed her, and said,

"Come with me—I have something to show you."

She opened a door, which disclosed a nursery. A baby girl in the cradle, Nugent on the floor, amusing an eighteen-months old boy, more lovely than a cherub.

"Have you three children?" began Lady Rose, but a cry of joy from the baby-boy arrested her. He held out his arms to her. She looked—she started—she ran. "My boy!—my boy!—my own little darling, and he knew me!"

If ever penitent but joyful tears were shed, they fell on the curls of the beautiful boy.

"His papa sent him your picture, my lady, and we taught him to love it."

So all the people that went into the Park that day, with the remains of headache, and a nightmare of the two bits of scandal, got rid of both—the one by means of the fresh air, and the other from seeing the beautiful Lady Silborough and the lovely Lady Rose sitting in the same carriage. And it was supposed they had caught Cupid himself, barely two years old, who, carefully guarded by little Lord Nugent, was for ever putting up his pretty little mouth to be kissed by Lady Rose, crowing “Mum, mum, mum,” in baby but loving fashion.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"For my soul is now at peace. All the trouble of my spirit  
 Was but the consecrated means in its guidance to the  
     right;  
 And if I have much suffered, 'twas according to my merit.  
 I trust the good in all."

M. J. EWEN.

NEVERTHELESS, stern Justice demanded a victim. Was it Lord Silborough? Too much eating and drinking, too much champagne over night, the anxiety and trouble of his ball, and a secret and bitter mortification known but to himself and two others, were altogether sufficient to disturb the healthful condition of the strongest man. But Lord Silborough was perfectly well.

Was it Lady Rose, who, tear-stained and remorse-stricken, succumbed to a sudden attack of fever, which caused grave apprehensions as to the result? Lady Rose was pale and languid, but utterly free from the slightest symptoms of fever.

Was it Lady Audrey? Blind as Justice is sup-

posed to be, at least she might have seen that, if there was to be a victim, Lady Audrey was the one. Spending her night in alternate fits of anger and mortification, she ought to have been found in the morning, tearing her hair, and in all the frenzy of insanity. From her home in Green Street Justice ought to have accompanied her to a madhouse, and left her there for time indefinite.

But Lady Audrey, with crumpled brow and wistful expression, looking more peevish, dolorous, and yellow than ever, sat reading her husband's last letter for the hundredth time, and slowly coming to the conclusion for the hundredth time that her darling Buckhurst wrote the coolest, most unhusbandlike, selfish letter that ever was penned. Here had she, with intense thought and labour, got up a plan and plot which she had every hope would lead to their being once more united at Silborough House, again in possession, from the fact that Lady Silborough was separated from her husband, and he wrote to say the life he was leading was exactly to his mind; he felt quite young again away from homely, antiquated England, with its obsolete, unrefined ideas—that he did not wonder it was an unmarrying age—there was nothing so pleasant and agreeable as a bachelor's life, &c., &c.

Perhaps Justice was right in saying Lady Audrey was sufficiently punished for her ridiculous plot (though so nearly irreparable), by having her heart slowly lacerated from the conviction, if her darling Buckhurst ever had loved her, he certainly did not love her now.

No, neither of these three was the victim demanded by Justice; for a horrid rumour spread from one end of London to the other that the lovely, joyous, exquisite Lady Silborough lay at the point of death. Carriage after carriage drove up to the door, each anxious inquirer noting the significant fact that straw was laid to and from the house as far as the eye could see; and the hall-porter, keeping an open door, whispered back, as if he feared his voice might penetrate the sick-chamber, to each inquiry,

“My lady is very ill.”

London, let us do it the justice to say, was shocked and in mourning for one whole day.

Oh! Justice, blind, stupid creature, why take the victim to molest, and not her tormentors? Oh! foolish, vain mortal, canst thou fathom the mind of the Lord, and note the means He useth to “deliver His people from evil?” Go up to the co  
of Heaven, where the ministering angels s

around, waiting in joyful expectation to fulfil the purpose of the Lord. Satan presents himself as in the time of Job, and accounts for what he has been doing, walking to and fro in the world.

“Hast thou seen that mortal, heaped up to the lips with riches, honours, happiness, and glory?”

“Yet is he but dust and ashes after all!” laughed Satan.

“He will awaken; the godly wife hath saved the husband.”

“He laughs at the venial fault he committed.”

“He shall have yet another chance. Go, smite his wife.”

“Will he care? He will provide himself with another.”

“Go, breathe into the souls of these people.”

And straightway three angels, with swift and powerful wings joyfully made their way to earth. One entered the sick-chamber.

“Yes, my lord, doubtless that was it—in her ladyship’s delicate situation the fatigue of the ball was too much for her.”

The angel drew near, and breathed into the soul of the gentle Elizabeth; she obeyed the instinct placed there.

“No, no,” she murmured, putting out her feeble

arm, and drawing her husband's ear close to her lips. "No, it was no fatigue—it was the shock. Oh! Harry, I thought I had lost you for ever and ever!" Then her pallid face became like death, cold dews burst on her forehead, and with solemn pathetic fervour she repeated, "For ever and ever."

The eye of the needle was passed. The veil fell from Lord Silborough's insensible heart, and showed him to himself, the common dust and ashes of the meanest man.

That "for ever and ever" smote upon his heart with such subtle power, it melted it at once. What had he ever done on which to think during that "ever and ever"? He seemed to feel as if his soul was taken from him, and thrown up into the air, like a bubble. On the right hand was a glorious light, from whence emanated the most beautiful rays, which, darting forward, strove to penetrate and catch the foolish, restless bubble. But it floated, danced, and sprang nearer and nearer to the left, where was a black and hideous chasm, down which countless bubbles were drawn with a seemingly irresistible power. "Save me, my God!" he murmured, as his soul seemed to make a feeble grasp, and missing a ray of light, took a headlong leap the other way.



Then the whole of heaven seemed opened ; a brighter, stronger, more luminous ray rolled like a ball of fire to the miserable soul, and tenderly took it into its splendour.

Lord Silborough bowed his head in the deepest humiliation upon the hands of his wife as he murmured,

“My darling, you are too good for me. Teach me, Elizabeth, to love Virtue as you do, that I may learn to abhor Vice. Oh ! my wife, what an inestimable thing must that goodness be, that the want of it in me has caused you this shock !”

Justice unveiled her eyes for a moment, as if to demand justice for herself.

The angel, satisfied, joyfully returned to heaven. The impulses for good had been taken and given, and were already bearing fruit.

Lady Rose, sick at heart, desiring to die instead of the woman she had so long envied, was alone in the Nutshell. For three days she had gone nowhere but to make inquiries at Silborough House. Gaby was on duty, but she was expecting him home. She heard him come, and go up at once to his dressing-room, to change his dress. She followed to her own room. In a short time she fancied she heard voices in Gaby's room, and went in. But

he was alone; the good, warm-hearted Gaby was on his knees, praying earnestly—so earnestly that he spoke aloud.

Rose went into the room; an angel accompanied her; she knelt by her husband, and the angel hovered over them, while they prayed for the life of the gentle Elizabeth. Then, as they rose from their knees, the angel breathed into the soul of Lady Rose, and straightway bore up their prayers to heaven.

“My darling,” murmured Rose, “I have had such a lesson to-day upon the folly of trusting the world. It has done more to open my eyes than anything else could; and if so, the illness of the matchless Elizabeth, provided she recovers, will have proved the means of my cure.”

“I have just sent,” said her husband, “to make the last inquiries for the night.”

“Thanks, my own good fellow. And now hear this. You know so-and-so and so-and-so, what excellent good people they are, or were supposed to be, and yet they are as heartless as the rest. They called here to-day, and of course I could not help speaking of Lady Silborough.

“‘Oh! yes; by-the-by,’ said one, ‘is she dead yet?’

“‘No, I think not. I hope she won’t die, but live, and give us just such another ball,’ said another.

“‘’Tis very stupid,’ said a third, ‘to die in the middle of the season ; it puts so many people into mourning.’

“‘Oh ! but people are more sensible now ; they retire for a week, to come out fresher than ever, or they run over to Paris.’

“Oh ! dear, dear Gaby, as they talked something whispered to me I was just like them. All of them, not three days ago raving about Elizabeth, whom I now acknowledge without a demur to be as superior to me as the stars to a daisy ; and yet she was forgotten already, spoken of as dead, or merely to be remembered as the giver of a good ball, though she was to be blamed for dying inconveniently. Ah ! here is a messenger. A note from Lord Sil himself. ‘God be thanked, my dear kind friends, He has been most merciful to me. My Elizabeth is out of danger. Thank Him on your knees for your happy S.’”

And it is after this fashion that the Almighty wrestles continually with the evil in the heart of man, whose “every thought is lighter than vanity itself.”

### *Three Wives.*

The ministering angels stand round in adoration, longing to speed on the merciful errand of breathing the will of the Almighty into the reckless, insensible souls of His erring creatures. How fruitlessly often, the heart of man knows for itself.

Yet by slight means, by a tender word, by a sudden impulse, by the commonest incident, cannot every soul say to itself, "By this did the Almighty deliver me from evil."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.







